William Hazlitt

Essayist & Critic

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ALEX IRELAND

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To
My Dearly Beloved Daughter
Alice.

Aeon Ireland
Sept. 15. 1889

WILLIAM HAZLITT

Essayist and Critic

Yours

W. Hazlitt.

H. Macdonald Miller.
– from Alice –
– 1897 –

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WILLIAM HAZLITT

Essayist and Critic

SELECTIONS FROM HIS WRITINGS

With a Memoir, Biographical and Critical,

BY

ALEXANDER IRELAND

AUTHOR OF "MEMOIR AND RECOLLECTIONS OF RALPH WALDO EMERSON," "THE BOOK-LOVER'S ENCHIRIDION," ETC. ETC.

LONDON AND NEW YORK
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1889

PREFACE.

In the following Selections from the writings of William Hazlitt, it has been my aim to present to the reader what is most characteristic of him as a Critic of Literature, and an Essayist on Life, Manners, and Art. The selection has been made with much care and deliberation, and after a life-long acquaintance with his works, which extend over a period of twenty-seven years (1805 to 1830), and number about thirty-five volumes.

The specimens selected include his remarks on, and general estimates of our greatest Poets, Dramatists, Novelists, and Essayists. Following these are given several of his best Essays on Men, Society, and Books, almost without abridgment, and from others the most striking pages. Among these will be found occasional passages illustrative of his individual experiences, hopes, aspirations, and disappointments, which will help the reader to understand his peculiar character. Among the essays given entire are, "My First Acquaintance with Poets," "On Persons one would wish to have seen," "On Living to Oneself," "On Going a Journey," and "On the Fear of Death." The essays "A Farewell to Essay-writing" and "The Sick-chamber" will be read with pathetic interest. The latter was written only a few weeks before his death, and has been unaccountably omitted from the collected edition of his principal writings. His carefully-drawn and searching estimate of Burke, as well as of his great antagonist, Fox, are reprinted without abridgment. Almost the whole of the admirable In-

troduction to the study of the Elizabethan Literature is given, in which he traces, with singular power, the causes which led to the remarkable awakening of genius and thought at that epoch of our history.

Of his criticisms on Painters and Painting a sufficient number of specimens are given to enable readers on this subject to form some idea of the treasures of subtle thought and insight awaiting them in the numerous papers which he contributed to this department of the Fine Arts. Never, up to his time, had there been given to the world such appreciative criticism of the works of the great painters, or such masterly estimates of their genius. His "Character of Hamlet" is given unabridged, being one of his most characteristic productions. Those who have studied Hazlitt, as revealed in his books, must come to the conclusion that in this ingenious and original paper, in which he theorizes on the character of Hamlet, he has drawn largely from within, and that his imaginary Dane is probably a reproduction of his own thoughts and feelings. As specimens of the remarkable versatility of his genius I have given his essays entitled "The Fight" and "On the Conduct of Life; or, Advice to a School-Boy" (his son). The latter is written with earnest feeling, and expressed in a simple and unadorned style. Any reader of the former, not knowing it to be Hazlitt's, would suppose it to have been penned by a skilful professional reporter of pugilistic combats. I have also given some extracts from his "Life of Napoleon" —a remarkable but unequal work—which show his philosophic insight into the causes of the French Revolution, as well as his powers of vivid description.

To those who may wish to go farther afield among the pleasant intellectual pasturages afforded by Hazlitt's voluminous writings, I may recommend the handy edition of his principal works in seven volumes (the "Life of Napoleon" is not included), published by Messrs. Bell & Sons, and a volume issued by Messrs. Reeves & Turner, containing exclusively his writings on the Fine Arts. This volume includes his excellent article on

The Fine Arts contributed to the *Encylopædia Britannica* in 1824. Both of these collections are edited by Mr. W. C. Hazlitt. The seven volumes of reprints of his principal writings, just referred to, comprise seventeen of the thirty-five volumes which bear his name.

The character of Hazlitt is one of deep interest, and deserving of careful study. With all his faults, he was a man to be loved and honoured. He was wayward, perverse, wilful, at times unreasonable and splenetic—often in consequence of a sense of his own intellectual superiority, and an impatience of mediocre and inferior minds. But against these failings and infirmities of temper—which belonged to the accidents of his nature, not to its essence—must be set his tenderness of heart, his unselfishness, his sympathy with the suffering and oppressed, his candour towards opponents, his rectitude and honesty of mind and purpose. He was an ardent lover of truth and beauty, if ever one existed, and he never swerved from his fealty to the cause of liberty and human progress. The highest eulogium that could be bestowed upon him is contained in one brief sentence of his friend Talfourd's:—"He had as passionate a desire for truth, as others have for wealth, or power, or fame." He was, perhaps, the most hardly treated man of genius of his time, and when one takes into account the unmerited obloquy to which he was so long and systematically subjected, it is not surprising that his sensitive nature was wounded, his temper soured, and his mind often darkened by fits of misanthropy which, for a time, overclouded the characteristic qualities of a noble, generous, and most unselfish nature. Herein lies the excuse, if not the justification, of those outbursts of fierce invective which he occasionally launched against his unscrupulous traducers.

In the Introductory Memoir I have endeavoured to present Hazlitt in his habit as he lived, and as he was known and seen by his friends—passing over none of his frailties or errors, and not hesitating to use freely the recorded recollections of those who were most intimate with him. These I

have incorporated in my sketch, in order to add to the reality of the picture. The reader will thus be able to see, through many different eyes, as it were, something of his personality and surroundings. I would particularly direct the attention of my readers to what was said of him by his earliest, dearest, wisest, and most considerate friend, Charles Lamb ("Memoir," p. lvii.), whose beautiful words will live in our literature as one of the truest and most tender tributes ever paid by one man of genius to another.

Should the following selections from his writings inspire in some thoughtful minds a desire to become better acquainted with a remarkable writer, too little known to the present generation, I shall feel amply rewarded for my labour of love. I can promise such minds a store of instruction and delightful mental invigoration. There is no better reading to be found than is afforded by his works. So happy a power of inspiring enthusiasm for genius, and of stimulating intellectual sympathy, has been exhibited by very few writers either of this or the last century. He has the supreme art of putting himself *en rapport* with his reader. He communicates the interest he feels. In his flowing and vigorous style he lays open the often stubborn thought, as the sharp ploughshare the glebe. The reader is never perplexed by ideas imperfectly grasped, or by thoughts which the writer cannot clearly express. What has been well said of Macaulay by Mr. Cotter Morison—"that his thought is always within his reach, and is unfolded with complete mastery and ease to its utmost filament"—is equally applicable to Hazlitt.

ALEXANDER IRELAND.

SOUTHPORT, *June* 1889.

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MEMOIR OF WILLIAM HAZLITT,

BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL.

THE father of the subject of this Memoir was William Hazlitt, of Shrone Hill, Tipperary, originally from the county of Antrim. He graduated at the University of Glasgow, where he was a contemporary of Adam Smith. About the year 1761 he joined the English Presbyterian body, and became a minister of that denomination. His first appointment was at Wisbeach, in Cambridgeshire, whither he went in 1764, at the age of twenty-seven. Two years later he married Grace Loftus, a farmer's daughter, who was twenty years old, very handsome, and also simple and good. The marriage took place upon his leaving Wisbeach for Marshfield, in Gloucestershire, where, in the following year, 1767, his eldest son, John, was born. A daughter, named Peggy, followed. He then left Marshfield for Maidstone, where more children were born, but none of them survived except the youngest. He was named William after his father, and lived to make the name illustrious. He was born in Mitre Lane, Maidstone, on the 10th of April 1778. His father, who knew Benjamin Franklin and corresponded with Dr. Priestley, left Maidstone when his youngest child was two years old, to take charge of a congregation of Unitarians at Bandon, in the county of Cork. In that town he was settled for three years. His sympathy with the Americans in their struggle for independence led him to exert himself in behalf of the American prisoners confined at Kinsale, near Bandon. On the conclusion of the war, he went with his family to America, reaching New York in May 1783. He was fifteen months in Philadelphia, preaching occasionally, and delivering in the winter a course of lectures on the Evidences of Christianity. He made a short stay at Boston, where he founded

the first Unitarian Church there, and declined the degree of D.D. In 1786–87 he returned to England, and settled as a Unitarian minister at Wem, in Shropshire. He was then in his fiftieth year. His son John, then about twenty years old, was beginning the world as a miniature-painter, and in 1788 had some of his works exhibited at the Royal Academy.

William, who was then a child of eight or nine, was educated at Wem under his father's roof, as well as in a neighbouring school. He was by all accounts a docile pupil. From his earliest boyhood his father had impressed upon his mind the great principles of moral and political truth and the duty of asserting the rights of his fellow-creatures. Some of his letters written to his father and brother when he was away from home on visits, as at Liverpool in 1790, indicate a studious, inquiring mind, with a religious tone of thought in them. In a letter written to his father from Liverpool when he was barely twelve years of age, he makes remarks which show a lively and shrewd observation of character. "Mrs. Barton asked us, as if she were afraid we would accept her invitation, if we would stay to tea . . . . I had rather one would tell one to go out of the house than ask one to stay, and at the same time be trembling all over for fear one should take a slice of meat or a dish of tea with them . . . . I spent a very agreeable day yesterday, as I read 160 pages of Priestley and heard two good sermons. . . . After I had sealed up my last letter to you, George asked me if I were glad the Test Act was not repealed. I told him, No. Then he asked me why; and I told him because I thought that all the people who are inhabitants of a country, of whatever sect or denomination, should have the same rights with others. But, says he, then they would try to get their religion established, or something to that purpose. Well, what if it should be so?"

Here is revealed the early dawning of his hatred of privilege and intolerance. It is evident that his boyhood was spent under happy influences. As a proof of this, here is a portion of his father's answer to the above letter, showing the excellent lessons which this unworldly man inculcated on his clever, eager, inquiring boy, who ever spoke of him in after years with the highest reverence and respect:—

"My Dear William, ... Your brother said that your letter to him was very long, very clever, and very entertaining. On Wednesday evening we had your letter, which was finished on the preceding Monday. The piety displayed in the first part of it was

a great refreshment to me; continue to cherish those thoughts which then occupied your mind. Continue to be virtuous, and you will finally be that happy being whom you describe; and, to this purpose, you have nothing more to do than to pursue that conduct which will always yield you the highest pleasures even in this present life. But he who once gives way to any known vice, in the very instant hazards his total depravity and total ruin. You must, therefore, fixedly resolve never, through any possible motives, to do anything which you believe to be wrong. This will be only resolving never to be miserable; and this I rejoicingly expect will be the unwavering resolution of my William. Your conversation upon the Test Act did you honour. If we only think justly, we shall always easily foil all the advocates of tyranny. The inhospitable ladies whom you mention were perhaps treated by you with too great severity. We know not how people may be circumstanced at a particular moment, whose disposition is generally friendly. They may then happen to pass under a cloud which unfits them for social intercourse. We must see them more than once or twice to be able to form a tolerable judgment of their characters. I only wish to caution you against forming too hasty a judgment of characters, who can seldom be known at a single interview. . . . I am glad you employed the last Sunday so well; and that the employment afforded you so much satisfaction. Nothing else can truly satisfy us but the acquisition of knowledge and virtue. May these blessings be yours more and more every day!"

Strange to say, his first literary production made its appearance when he was only thirteen. The occasion was this. The Birmingham mob, in an outburst of zeal for the supposed interests of the monarchy and the Christian religion, had burned the house of Dr. Priestley over his head, and had destroyed his valuable library. Fired by this insult to one who professed the religion in which he himself had been brought up, the boy wrote a letter to the editor of the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* on the subject. It is so remarkable a production for so young a writer, and so reveals his mental character and future opinions, that it is worth giving entire:—

"Mr. Wood,—'Tis really surprising that men—men, too, that aspire to the character of Christians—should seem to take such pleasure in endeavouring to load with infamy one of the best, one of the wisest, and one of the greatest of men.

"One of your late correspondents, under the signature of ΟΥΔΕΙΣ, seems desirous of having Dr. Priestley in chains, and indeed would

not perhaps (from the gentleman's seemingly charitable disposition) be greatly averse to seeing him in the flames also. This is the Christian!

"This the mild spirit its great Master taught. Ah! Christianity, how art thou debased! How am I grieved to see that universal benevolence, that love to all mankind, that love even to our enemies, and that compassion for the failings of our fellow-men, that thou art contracted to promote, contracted and shrunk up within the narrow limits that prejudice and bigotry mark out. But to return;—supposing the gentleman's end to be intentionally good, supposing him indeed to desire all this, in order to extirpate the Doctor's supposedly impious and erroneous doctrines and promote the cause of truth; yet the means he would use are certainly wrong. For may I be allowed to remind him of this (which prejudice has hitherto apparently prevented him from seeing), that violence and force can never promote the cause of truth, but reason and argument or love, and whenever these fail, all other means are vain and ineffectual. And as the Doctor himself has said in his letter to the inhabitants of Birmingham, 'that if they destroyed him, ten others would arise, as able or abler than himself, and stand forth immediately to defend his principles; and that were these destroyed, an hundred would appear; for the God of truth will not suffer His cause to lie defenceless.'

"This letter of the Doctor's also, though it throughout breathes the pure and genuine spirit of Christianity, is, by another of your correspondents, charged with sedition and heresy; but indeed, if such sentiments as those which it contains be sedition and heresy, sedition and heresy would be an honour; for all their sedition is that fortitude that becomes the dignity of man and the character of Christian: and their heresy, Christianity: the whole letter, indeed, far from being seditious, is peaceable and charitable, and far from being heretical, that is, in the usual acceptance of the word, furnishing proofs of that resignation so worthy of himself. And to be sensible of this, 'tis only necessary that any one, laying aside prejudice, read the letter itself with candour. What or who, then, is free from the calumniating pen of malice—malice concealed, perhaps, under the specious disguise of religion and a love of truth?

"Religious persecution is the bane of all religion, and the friends of persecution are the worst enemies religion has; and of all persecutions, that of calumny is the most intolerable. Any other kind of persecution can affect our outward circumstances

only, our properties, our lives; but this may affect our characters for ever. And this great man has not only had his goods spoiled, his habitation burned, and his life endangered, but is also calumniated, aspersed with the most malicious reflections, and charged with everything bad, for which a misrepresentation of the truth and prejudice can give the least pretence. And why all this? To the shame of some one, let it be replied, merely on account of particular speculative opinions, and not anything scandalous, shameful, or criminal in his moral character. 'Where I see,' says the great and admirable Robinson, 'a spirit of intolerance, I think I see the great Devil.' And 'tis certainly the worst of devils. And here I shall conclude, staying only to remind your anti-Priestlian correspondents, that when they presume to attack the character of Dr. Priestley, they do not so much resemble the wren pecking at the eagle, as the owl attempting by the flap of her wings to hurl Mount Etna into the ocean; and that while Dr. Priestley's name 'shall flourish in immortal youth,' and his memory be respected and revered by posterity, prejudice no longer blinding the understandings of men, theirs will be forgotten in obscurity, or only remembered as the friends of bigotry and persecution, the most odious of all characters. ΕΑΙΑΣΟΝ."

While at Liverpool, young Hazlitt acquired some knowledge of French and music. Afterwards he continued to read with his father, but does not appear to have devoted much time to writing. His father had a strong desire to see his son a Dissenting minister; but to this destination the youth had an invincible repugnance. In his fifteenth year, however, he was sent to the Unitarian College at Hackney, where he was placed under the tutorship of a Mr. Corrie, who is reported to have said of his pupil that "he found him rather backward in many of the ordinary points of learning, and in general of a dry and intractable understanding." His mind was occupying itself with political and metaphysical ideas and projects. Philosophy gained more of his attention than Theology. In the ordinary routine of education for the Unitarian ministry, he was a backward student. His teacher found that this intractable pupil was not an idler, but that his head was full of arguments about the bounds of religious liberty, the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, and a project for a new theory of civil and criminal jurisprudence. The latter scheme of political rights and general jurisprudence was afterwards (1828) set forth by him in the form which

it takes in the *Literary Remains* (1836). Naturally enough, his father wished that he should abandon this desultory essay-writing and devote himself to the work of the College; but to the expression of this wish he replied with a dignified statement of his opinion that, "with respect to themes, he really thought them disserviceable than otherwise." How, when, and under what circumstances he quitted the Unitarian College is not recorded. It would seem, however, that he entirely abandoned the notion of entering the Unitarian ministry, and that he returned to his father's house at Wem.

It was at this time, 1798, when Hazlitt was twenty years old, that Coleridge, who was officiating at Shrewsbury for the Unitarian minister there, came over to Wem, according to the custom of courtesy among ministers, to pay a visit to the Rev. William Hazlitt. Young Hazlitt had already walked to Shrewsbury, through ten miles of mud, to hear him preach; and his recollections of what he then heard, and of Coleridge's visit to Wem a few days later, is too well known to be more than alluded to here. These recollections are given in his brilliant paper, entitled, "My First Acquaintance with Poets," which will be found *in extenso* in the present volume. Coleridge's brilliancy entirely captivated young Hazlitt, who was bitterly disappointed when, after three months' stay at Shrewsbury, Coleridge accepted Mr. Thomas Wedgwood's offer of an annuity of £150 to retire from the ministry, and devote himself to poetry and philosophy. This change did not break up their friendship. Coleridge invited the young thinker to visit him at Nether Stowey, in Somersetshire, where, some time later, he received him kindly, and took him to Alfoxden, two miles from Stowey, where Wordsworth was then living. The poet was then from home, but in a day or two after his return from Bristol, he called at Coleridge's cottage; and there it was that Hazlitt first saw Wordsworth face to face.

It was during this visit that Coleridge first encouraged young Hazlitt to write. The work he set himself to compose was *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action:* being *An Argument in favour of the Natural Disinterestedness of the Human Mind;* but it was not published until eight years afterwards, viz., in 1805. Sir James Mackintosh pronounced it "a work of great ability." Hazlitt himself said of it, that it was "the only thing I ever piqued myself upon writing." It is remarkable as an instance of early development of the reasoning powers—the first rough draft or outline of the plan of the essay being made at the age of eighteen. The sale of the

book was small, and he never received any profit from it. A valuable friend made by him about this time was the Rev. Joseph Fawcett, who had a strong relish for all good literature, and for the catholicity of whose tastes he always expressed great admiration. "A heartier friend or honester critic I never coped withal. With him I passed some of the pleasantest days of my life. The conversations I had with him on subjects of taste and philosophy gave me a delight such as I can never feel again."

From 1798 to 1802 little is known of Hazlitt and his doings. He had for some time definitely abandoned the notion of entering the Unitarian ministry, but had not settled on any plan of life. His time seems to have been spent in reading and thinking, but without any fixed object. A career was, however, indispensable. The income of his father was wholly insufficient to support him in practical idleness, so that he began to cast about for some means of living. At this time, his elder brother John, who had become a painter, came forward with a suggestion that he should embrace the profession of painting. This notion was adopted, and in 1802 William took up his abode under his brother's roof, and began the study of art in earnest. In October of the same year he left England for Paris, where he continued his studies, occupying himself with copying some of the pictures in the Louvre. He remained four months in Paris, and during that time made copies and sketches from Titian, Guido, Raphael's Transfiguration, and Lana's Death of Clorinda—a kind of work for which he had sundry commissions from friends of his brother in London. He then returned to England, bringing with him, not merely his copies from the great masters, but a set of tastes and principles in art, very few of which he ever afterwards modified. Not long after his return, he made a professional tour in the North of England as a portrait-painter, and was not unsuccessful in obtaining sitters. Wordsworth sat to him, but Hazlitt, dissatisfied with his work, destroyed the portrait. During this tour he visited a family in Liverpool called Railton, who were friends of his father's, and fell in love with an attractive daughter of the house, of whom he painted a miniature on ivory. The suit was not favoured by the young lady's family and the relations between the lovers were broken off. Somewhere about this time it is reported that he fell in love a second time—in this case, with a rustic beauty in Wordsworth's neighbourhood. According to Patmore, he narrowly escaped being ducked by the villagers for his unwelcome attentions. De Quincey reports that

Hazlitt was smitten by the charms of Dorothy Wordsworth, the poet's sister, but the story wants proof. At all events, if the passion ever existed, it came to nothing.

Among other portraits, he painted one of his father—which was a labour of love both to artist and sitter—a half-length of Sir Joshua Reynolds, and a head of Lear. One of his earliest attempts was the head of an old woman in deep shade, of which he makes mention in one of his essays. It was done after the manner of Rembrandt, and was said to have been a picture of considerable effect. He was a severe critic of his own performances, and his standard was a high one. He failed to satisfy his own aspirations and ideals, or to overcome the diffidence he felt in his own powers. He was often impatient with himself, and when he could not produce the effect he desired, he has been known to cut the canvas into ribbons. At last he decisively relinquished the pursuit he so much loved, and laid down his pencil for ever. It is difficult to say whether patience and perseverance would have overcome his difficulties. Northcote said he gave up the experiment too soon, and that he would have made a great painter had he devoted himself entirely to his art. Among the latest work from his hand was a portrait of his newly-made friend, Charles Lamb, in the dress of a Venetian senator. The discipline of this brief practice of art was no doubt of permanent advantage to him. It has been justly said that it made him better understand "the worth of beauty and the elements of character; his perception was quickened, his insight deepened, and his powers as an observer and analyst enlarged." In connection with this phase of his life, his essays on "The Pleasure of Painting," "On a Portrait by Vandyck," "On a Landscape of Nicholas Poussin," "Sketches of the Principal Picture-Galleries in England," and his article "The Fine Arts," are well worth reading.

In 1806 he published at his own expense a pamphlet entitled *Free Thoughts on Public Affairs; or Advice to a Patriot.* Although powerful in its language and breathing a warm spirit of freedom, it attracted little attention, and is now all but unknown. It is reprinted in the volume, containing "The Spirit of the Age" in Messrs. Bell & Sons' edition of his chief works. In 1807 appeared *An Abridgment of The Light of Nature Revealed, by Abraham Tucker, Esq., originally published in seven volumes, under the name of Edward Search, Esq.* It was through the friendly offices of Charles Lamb (whose acquaintance he had about this time made through his brother John) that Johnson the publisher was induced to under-

take the issue of this work. In it the spirit of the seven volumes is felicitously condensed into one, in which are preserved entire all the singular turns of thought and striking illustrations of the original. "As to the pains and labour it has cost me, or the time I have devoted to it," he says, "I shall say nothing. However, if any one should be scrupulous on that head, I might answer, as Sir Joshua Reynolds is said to have done to some persons who cavilled at the price of a picture, and desired to know how long he had been doing it—'All my life'" In his "Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy," Sir James Mackintosh devotes a chapter to Tucker, and refers to Hazlitt's abridgment of it, and "his excellent preface to it." The learned Dr. Parr, who was a thorough master of the original work, said that he never could tell what had been omitted in the abridgment—a very happy compliment to the abridger. In the same year (1807) he issued a clever attempt to invalidate the theory of Malthus, under the title, *Reply to the Essay on Population by the Rev. T. R. Malthus. In a Series of Letters: to which are added Extracts from the Essay, with Notes.* This had been begun as a series of letters in a newspaper, and was advertised by Longman & Co. as in the press "by a person of eminence." He also gave to the world this year *The Eloquence of the British Senate; or Select Specimens from the Speeches of the most distinguished Parliamentary Speakers, from the beginning of the Reign of Charles I. to the present time; with Notes, Biographical, Critical, and Explanatory,* 2 vols. This was a piece of honest taskwork. The speeches are illustrated by powerfully drawn characters of some of the more prominent orators—especially those of more recent date—Chatham, Pitt, Burke, and Fox. These portraits were afterwards reprinted in his *Political Essays,* 1819.

It was at the house of his brother John, at 12 Rathbone Place, that Hazlitt first met Dr. Stoddart and his sister Sarah. Stoddart, who was then, like John Hazlitt, an extreme Liberal in politics, was appointed King's Advocate at Malta. In 1807 Hazlitt became engaged to Miss Stoddart, who was about thirty-two years of age, he being twenty-nine. She had been on the point of marriage several times, but the various matches had been broken off, generally on account of pecuniary reasons. Miss Stoddart seems to have been intimate with Mary Lamb, and those who are curious to know more about the former lady will find a number of letters from Mary to her friend in Mr. W. C. Hazlitt's Memoir of his grandfather. The marriage, after some preparations, in which he exhibited much

eccentricity, was solemnised on Sunday, 1st May 1808, at St. Andrew's, Holborn. The only persons present, besides the bride and bridegroom, were Dr. and Mrs. Stoddart, and Charles Lamb and his sister. The bride's property, which was worth about £120 per annum, had been, at her brother's instigation, and to Hazlitt's annoyance, settled upon herself. The ceremony over, they proceeded to the village of Winterslow, in Wiltshire, where Mrs. Hazlitt's little property was situated. They lived in a cottage which formed part of the property. Here Hazlitt prepared a work which appeared in 1810 under the following title—*A New and Improved Grammar of the English Tongue; for the use of Schools. In which the Genius of our Speech is especially attended to, and the Discoveries of Mr. Horne Tooke, and other Modern Writers on the Formation of Language are for the first time incorporated. To which is added a New Guide to the English Tongue, in a Letter to W. F. Mylius, author of the School Dictionary, by Edward Baldwin, Esq.* This work, although well received, was not a success. It never reached a second edition, and is now a bibliographical curiosity. It was afterwards abridged by Mr. Godwin, under the name of Baldwin. A critic of the day said, that although intended for the use of schools, "yet the advanced student would find in it much valuable information, the definitions being concise yet intelligible, the rules clear and important, and the examples selected perspicuous and appropriate." He also about this time prepared an abridgment into English of Bourgoing's "Tableau de l'Espagne moderne," but this was labour wasted, as no publisher would bring it out. It was never printed, and still remains in MS.

In January 1809 a son was born, who was named William, but he died when six months old. In the following autumn the Lambs paid a visit to the Hazlitts in Wiltshire, along with Martin Burney and Colonel Phillips. After a fashion which it is now difficult to understand, these guests appear to have paid for their board during their stay in Wiltshire. Hazlitt was about this time busy with a Memoir of Holcroft, which, however, did not appear until 1816, under the title *Memoirs of the late Thomas Holcroft, written by himself; and continued to the time of his Death, from his Diary, Notes, and other Papers.* The continuation is by Hazlitt. It was reprinted in 1852 in "The Traveller's Library." The materials for this work had been confided to him by Holcroft's family. It was humorously nicknamed by Mary Lamb "The Life Everlasting," from the way in which it was perpetually talked about by friends interested in

Holcroft, and from the inordinate length of time during which it hung on hand. On 26th September 1811 another son was born. Like the first, he was named William, after his father and his grandfather. A few months afterwards the couple moved from Winterslow to London, where they settled down at No. 19 York Street, Westminster—a house which, according to tradition, had belonged to Milton, and which looked out upon one occupied by Jeremy Bentham. Hazlitt had no introductions, was shy, proud, and irritable, and had need, as Lamb hinted, of "something of a better temper," if not of "a smoother head of hair." He had ability enough to set up a score of popular authors, and a warm heart, but he was wanting in that open manner which goes so far in the way of attracting and winning friends. He was then thirty-four years old. He had one or two intimates who understood and loved him—notably Charles Lamb and his sister. He began his London career by proposing to the Royal Institution to give a course of ten lectures on the English Philosophers and Metaphysicians. His name being in some repute, the offer was accepted. Some fragments of these lectures have been given in the volumes entitled *Literary Remains*. He also sought and obtained an engagement as a parliamentary reporter on the *Morning Chronicle*. He was not a good shorthand writer, and trusted much to his good memory. After a short experiment of this kind of life, he took to critical writing for the *Chronicle*, sometimes contributing political articles. Early in 1814 he succeeded Mr. Mudford as theatrical critic on that paper. His dramatic experiences commenced with Bannister. His great favourites were Kean and Miss Stephens, and he was an enthusiastic admirer of Mrs. Siddons. His connection with the *Chronicle* was not of long continuance. About this time he also wrote for the *Examiner* and the *Champion* newspapers. In 1814 Jeffrey asked him to write for the *Edinburgh Review*. His second article embodied a brilliant series of sketches of the English Novelists (including remarks on Cervantes and Le Sage), which he afterwards reproduced in his *Lectures on the English Comic Writers*. The reader will find this delightful paper in the selections following this Memoir. For some years his contributions to the *Edinburgh Review* were tolerably numerous. Altogether nineteen articles from his pen appeared in its pages, ranging from 1814 to 1830. His grandson gives a list of fourteen only. In a letter to *Notes and Queries*, March 1879, to which any reader curious in this matter is referred, I point out five additional articles, which may without doubt be attributed to him, one of them,

on "American Literature and Dr. Channing," of peculiar interest for reasons given in my communication.

Mr. W. C. Hazlitt * in his Memoir of his grandfather refers to the establishment in York Street, Westminster, and to the domestic mismanagement and want of home comfort which characterised it. He gives a curious illustration of this, furnished by Haydon the artist, whom Hazlitt had invited to a christening entertainment. When Haydon arrived, Hazlitt was out endeavouring to find a parson, and his wife was sitting by the fire in a bedgown,—nothing ready for the guests, and everything wearing the appearance of neglect and indifference. The biographer, speaking of his grand-parents, says that "the marriage was certainly not one of choice (though it was in no way forced upon him), and the woman with whom he thus knit himself permanently was one of the least domestic of her sex. She was a lady of excellent disposition, an affectionate mother, and endowed with no ordinary intelligence and information. But for household economy she had not the slightest turn; and she was selfish, unsympathising, without an idea of management, and destitute of all taste in dress. She was fond of finery, but her finery was not always very congruous. A lady is living who recollects very well the first visit Mrs. Hazlitt paid to her family at Bayswater. It was a very wet day, and she had been to a *walking match*. She was dressed in a white muslin gown and black velvet spencer, and a leghorn hat with a white feather. Her clothes were perfectly saturated, and a complete change of things was necessary before she could sit down." With a wife of such "excellent disposition" and habits as the mistress of his household, it was not likely that the wayward and unmethodical Hazlitt could lead a very happy or comfortable life. Later on it will be seen how the union of this ill-matched pair ended.

Between January 1815 and January 1817 appeared a series of papers in the *Examiner* under the title, "The Round Table," which in the latter year were collected in two volumes, with some omissions and additions, and published under the title *The Round Table: A Collection of Essays on Literature, Men, and Manners.* It was proposed that this series of papers should be in the manner of the early periodical essayists the *Spectator* and *Tatler*. Twelve

* Grandson of William Hazlitt, author of "Memoir of William Hazlitt," "History of the Origin and Rise of the Venetian Republic," "A Hand-Book of Early English Literature," "Mary and Charles Lamb, Their Poems, Letters and Remains," editor of "The Shakespeare Jest-Books," &c. &c.

of the essays were contributed by Leigh Hunt, and one by an anonymous writer. The rest were by Hazlitt. These papers are generally shorter than those he wrote later. They are distinguished by force of style and acuteness of observation, and deserve a place in the literature of the earlier portion of this century. They possess all the ease and unstudied variety of conversation.

In 1817 Hazlitt gave to the world his *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*. This work, although it professes to be dramatic criticism, is in reality a discourse on the philosophy of life and human nature, more suggestive than many approved treatises expressly devoted to that subject. It was very favourably criticised by Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review*, who considered it a work of originality and genius. "What we chiefly look for in such a work," says he, "is a fine sense of the beauties of the author, and an eloquent exposition of them: and all this, and more, we think may be found in the volume before us. There is nothing niggardly in his praises, and nothing affected in his raptures. He seems animated throughout with a full and hearty sympathy with the delight which his author should inspire, and pours himself gladly out in explanation of it, with a fluency and ardour, obviously much more akin to enthusiasm than affectation."

In 1818 his dramatic criticisms, contributed during the previous four years to the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Champion*, the *Examiner*, and the *Times*, were collected into a volume, under the title, *A View of the English Stage, or a Series of Dramatic Criticisms*. He had always been fond of the theatres, and frequented them to the last. His earliest admiration rested on Mrs. Siddons. He always held that she had touched the summit of perfection. "While the stage lasts," he used to say, "there never will be another Mrs. Siddons." One of the last essays he wrote, only a few months before his death, was called "The Free Admission," which is full of picturesque and striking thought. The finest criticisms in the above-named volume are those in which he illustrated the acting of Edmund Kean, whose matchless powers he recognised at once on the very first evening of his appearance, and whose reputation he did so much to establish, in spite of actors, managers, and critics. From that night he became the most devoted of Kean's supporters. "His dramatic criticisms," says Talfourd, "are more pregnant with fine thoughts on that bright epitome of human life than any other which ever were written. . . . He began to write with a rich fund of theatrical recollections; and except when Kean, or Miss

Stephens, or Liston supplied new and decided impulses, he did little more than draw upon this old treasury. The theatre to him was redolent of the past—of images of Mrs. Siddons, of Kemble, of Bannister, of Jordan, . . . but his habits of mind were unsuited to the ordinary duties of a theatrical critic. The players put him out. He could not, like Leigh Hunt, who gave theatrical criticism a place in modern literature, apply his graphic powers to the details of a performance, and make it interesting by the delicacy of his touch. . . . In just and picturesque criticism, Hunt has never been approached."

In the same year (1818) he gave a series of eight lectures on the English Poets at the Surrey Institution. These were followed by two other courses, on the English Comic Writers in 1819, and on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth in 1821. With reference to his manner in lecturing, his friend Talfourd says that he was not eloquent in the true sense of the term ; for his thoughts were too weighty to be moved along by the shallow stream of feeling which an evening's excitement can rouse. He wrote all his lectures, and read them as they were written ; but his deep voice and earnest manner suited his matter well. He seemed to dig into his subject—and not in vain. In delivering his longer quotations, he had scarcely continuity enough for the versification of Shakespeare and Milton, "with linked sweetness long drawn out ;" but he gave Pope's brilliant satire and divine compliments, which are usually complete within the couplet, with an elegance and point which the poet himself would have felt as their highest praise. Talfourd mentions one or two instances in which he startled and shocked his audience with a fine audacity which put their prejudices and conventional feelings on edge. "When he read a well-known extract from Cowper, comparing a poor villager with Voltaire, and had pronounced the line 'a truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew,' they broke into a joyous shout of self-gratulation that they were so much wiser than a wicked Frenchman. When he passed by Mrs. Hannah More with observing that 'she had written a great deal which he had never read,' a voice gave expression to the general commiseration and surprise by calling out, 'More pity for you!' They were confounded at his reading, with more emphasis perhaps than discretion, Gay's epigrammatic lines on Sir Richard Blackmore, in which scriptural persons are freely hitched into rhyme ; but he went doggedly on to the end, and, by his perseverance, baffled those who, if he had acknowledged himself wrong by stopping, would have hissed him without mercy.

He once had an edifying advantage over them. He was enumerating the humanities which endeared Dr. Johnson to his mind, and, at the close of an agreeable catalogue, mentioned, as last and noblest, his carrying the poor victim of disease and dissipation on his back through Fleet Street—at which a titter arose from some, who were struck by the picture as ludicrous, and a murmur from others, who deemed the allusion unfit for ears polite. He paused for an instant, and then added in his sturdiest and most impressive manner, 'An act which realises the parable of the good Samaritan,' at which his moral and delicate hearers shrunk rebuked into deep silence."

The first course of lectures was soon afterwards published, under the title, *Lectures on the English Poets, delivered at the Surrey Institution*, and was well received—a second edition appearing in the following year. The volume is perhaps one of the most generally interesting of his critical works. He handles his subject with great *gusto*, acuteness, and felicity of touch; you feel that much patient thinking must have been exercised by the writer before giving his final judgments on our great poets. Many of these judgments show a very delicate apprehension of the authors under notice, mingled with an exquisite sensitiveness to beauty of every kind, moral and material. The reader capable of enjoying an intellectual treat of a high order will linger over Reflections on Poetry in General, the Remarks on Shakespeare and Milton, and his account of the Rise and Progress of the Late School of Poetry.

His *Lectures on the English Comic Writers* were delivered and published in the year following—1819. They include a great variety of interesting subjects—the comic poets and dramatists, the periodical essayists, the great novelists of the last century—Fielding, Smollet, Sterne and Richardson—as well as some of the modern writers of fiction, such as Scott and Godwin. The works of Hogarth also come under review. The reader may not agree with him in his estimate of Steele, whom he places above Addison, but he should carefully read the critic's reasons for his opinion. In his criticism on Johnson there will be no difference of judgment. His remarks on the Congreve and Wycherley group of dramatists have been pronounced by Leigh Hunt almost equal to Lamb's, leaving a truer impression respecting them, as well as containing the most detailed criticism on their individual plays. His opinions of Rabelais, Montaigne, Cervantes, and Le Sage, which occur in the lectures on the Essayists and Novelists, are among the good things in this volume.

In 1817 and 1818 he contributed articles to the *Champion*, the *Examiner*, and the *Yellow Dwarf*, a periodical started by Mr. John Hunt, which only lived a few months. Most of these articles were afterwards reprinted in his collected volumes. An Edinburgh magazine about this date contained some of his lucubrations—one of them being on the question "Whether Pope was a Poet." In 1819 appeared *A Letter to William Gifford, Esq., from William Hazlitt, Esq.* It consists of eighty-seven pages, and exposes "the wretched cavillings, wilful falsehoods and omissions, and servile malignity" of the disgraceful articles in the *Quarterly Review* on his *Round Table*, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, and *Lectures on the English Poets*. These attacks, as well as those in *Blackwood's Magazine*, will be spoken of more fully in a subsequent page. Talfourd said that the latter portion of the *Letter to Gifford* was one of Hazlitt's noblest effusions.

In 1819 was published *Political Essays, with Sketches of Public Characters*. It was Mr. Hone's proposal to collect Hazlitt's political writings from the columns of the *Morning Chronicle* and other journals, and he was the publisher of the volume. It was dedicated to John Hunt, one of the sturdiest and most independent of Liberals, and a man of the highest probity. The preface to this collection runs to a considerable length—thirty-six pages. His son says of it, that in his mind it is "the very finest and most manly exposition of high political principle that was ever put forth, and the whole of the volume breathes the noblest spirit of liberty and virtue." His opening words are: "I am no politician, and still less can I be said to be a party man; but I have a hatred for tyranny, and a contempt for its tools; and this feeling I have expressed as often and as strongly as I could;" and a few pages farther on, after defining his principles and politics: "This is the only politics I know; the only patriotism I feel. The question with me is, whether I and all mankind are born slaves or free. That is the one thing necessary to know and to make good. The rest is *flocci, nauci, nihili, pili*. Secure this point, and all is safe; lose this, and all is lost." It may be here mentioned that in this volume were reprinted Hazlitt's estimates of the characters of Burke, Fox, Chatham, and Pitt, from *The Eloquence of the British Senate*.

One of the most important of Hazlitt's works was published in 1821, viz., *Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, delivered at the Surrey Institution*. After a general introductory view of the subject, he criticises the dramatists and poets anterior to, contemporary with, and immediately succeeding

Shakespeare—Sir Philip Sydney's "Arcadia" and the works of Bacon, Sir Thomas Browne, and Jeremy Taylor, the Spirit of Ancient and Modern Literature, and the German drama contrasted with that of the Age of Elizabeth. This volume contains some of the best criticisims from his pen. They display more than his usual strength, acuteness, and animation, with less of his usual acerbities of temper. An American critic justly says that "his stern, sharp analysis pierces and probes the subject down through the surface to the centre; and it is exercised in a more kindly spirit than is common with him. He had a profound appreciation of the elder dramatists, though a less social feeling for them than Lamb; and their characteristic excellences drew from him some of his heartiest bursts of eloquent panegyric." From Hazlitt's criticisms and Lamb's "Specimens" the general reader will gain a more vivid notion of the intellectual era they commemorate than from any other sources except the originals themselves. The reader will find in the *Edinburgh Review* for 1820 an article on this volume from the pen of Talfourd, characterised by warm appreciation of the ability of Hazlitt, as well as by a discriminating judgment of his deficiencies and limitations. "He possesses one noble quality at least," says his critic, "for the office which he has chosen, in the intense admiration and love which he feels for the great authors on whose excellences he chiefly dwells. His relish for their beauties is so keen, that while he describes them, the pleasures which they impart become almost palpable to the sense. He introduces us almost corporeally into the presence of the great of old time. He draws aside the veil of Time with a hand tremulous with mingled delight and reverence, and descants, with kindling enthusiasm, on all the delicacies of that picture of genius which he discloses. His intense admiration of intellectual beauty seems always to sharpen his critical faculties. He perceives it, by a kind of intuitive power, how deeply soever it may be buried in rubbish, and separates it in a moment from all that would encumber or deform it." The introductory lecture is distinguished by a peculiar dignity and weight of style and observation, which makes it perhaps one of the best and most unexceptionable of his compositions. He shows that the general causes of that sudden and rich development of poetical feeling and of intellectual activity were mainly the mighty impulse given to thought by the Reformation, by the translation of the Bible, the discovery of the New World, and the new opening of the stores of classic lore. The translation of the Bible, he considers, was the chief influence in bringing about the great work. To use his own words, "It

threw open, by a secret spring, the rich treasures of religion and morality, which had been there locked up as in a shrine. It revealed the visions of the prophets, and conveyed the lessons of inspired teachers to the meanest of the people. . . . The Bible was thrown open to all ranks and conditions 'to run and read,' with its wonderful table of contents, from Genesis to the Revelation. . . . To leave more disputable points, and take only the more historical parts of the Old Testament or the moral sentiments of the New, there is nothing like them in the power of exciting awe and admiration or of riveting sympathy. . . . There is something in the character of Christ, too (leaving religious faith quite out of the question), of more sweetness and majesty, and more likely to work a change in the mind of man, by the contemplation of its idea alone, than any to be found in history, whether actual or feigned. His character is that of a sublime humanity, such as was never seen on earth before our race. There shone manifestly both in His words and actions, . . . in every act and word of His life, a grace, a mildness, a dignity and love, a patience and wisdom worthy of the Son of God. His whole life and being were imbued, steeped in the word *Charity*. . . . He taught the love of good for the sake of good, without regard to personal and remoter views, and made the affections of the heart the sole seat of morality, instead of the pride of the understanding or the sternness of the will. . . . He has done more to humanise the thoughts and tame the unruly passions than all who have tried to reform and benefit mankind."

Before leaving this work, I must relate a circumstance in connection with it recorded by his friend Mr. Procter (Barry Cornwall). He says, "He had a very quick perception of the beauties and defects of books. When he was about to write his 'Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth,' he knew little or nothing of the dramatists of that time, with the exception of Shakespeare. He spoke to Charles Lamb and to myself, who were supposed by many to be well acquainted with those ancient writers. I lent him about a dozen volumes, comprehending the finest of the old plays; and he then went down to Winterslow Hut, in Wiltshire, and after a stay of six weeks came back to London, fully impregnated with the subject, with his thoughts fully made up upon it, and with all his lectures written. And he then appeared to comprehend the character and merits of the old writers more thoroughly than any other person, although he had so lately entered upon the subject."

In 1820 was started a periodical called the *London Magazine*,

edited by Mr. John Scott, formerly editor of the *Champion*, a man of considerable ability and fine literary tastes, who secured as contributors some of the ablest writers of the day, among whom were Hazlitt, Lamb, De Quincey, and Allan Cunningham, and a year or two later, Thomas Carlyle, whose "Life of Schiller" first appeared in its pages. Lamb's immortal "Essays of Elia" made their first appearance in this magazine. Hazlitt contributed to it about a dozen essays during the first two years of its existence. Two of these essays are included in the first volume of *Table-Talk, or Original Essays*, published in 1821. The others were afterwards included in another publication of Hazlitt's, called *The Plain Speaker*, which did not appear until some years later. A second volume of *Table-Talk* followed in 1822, and a second edition in 1824, with the additional title *Original Essays on Men and Manners*. Many of these essays were written at Winterslow Hut (spelled Hutt), a coaching-inn on the border of Salisbury Plain, to which he had been in the habit of resorting when he wished to get away from London.

This solitary and desolately situated inn will always be remembered with interest from the beautiful allusion to it in his *Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*, when speaking of the old dramatists Decker and Webster. The passage will be found in the Selections, p. 181. It was his favourite haunt when he wished to secure that entire solitude and seclusion from the world which he found so favourable to thought and quiet literary work. It was here that he drew upon his recollections of books and pictures, recalling what he had observed of men and things, probing his own character unshrinkingly, and extracting an infinite amount of self-knowledge from his own infirmities. It was here he would wander for hours over the bare, bleak pasturages and among the scantily-wooded hollows, and get home to his inn, miles from any other habitation, and set down the thoughts that had come to him on his solitary rambles, making the whole evening hours his own for steady and continuous work. Prompted by a wish to see this memorable resort of Hazlitt's—a wish "subdued and cherished long"—the writer of this Memoir at last realised his desire, and on a beautiful spring day—May Day of the present year—found himself at Winterslow Hutt. It is on the old coach-road between London and Salisbury, and near the sixth milestone from that cathedral town. In the old days, before railways, the London coach stopped here to change horses, and the traveller could find good cheer and accommodation if required. Now it is a desolate place, fallen into decay,

and tenanted by a labouring man and his family, cultivating a small farm of some thirty acres and barely able to make a living out of it. In winter two or three weeks will sometimes elapse without even a beggar or tramp or cart passing the door. On the ground-floor, looking out upon a horse-pond, flanked by two old lime-trees, is a little parlour, which was the one probably used by Hazlitt as his sitting-room. At the other end of the house is a large empty room, formerly devoted to cock-fighting matches and singlestick combats, in which he who first brought blood from his adversary's head was pronounced victor. It was with a strange and eerie feeling that I contemplated this little parlour, and pictured to myself the many solitary evenings during which Hazlitt sat in it, enjoying copious libations of his favourite beverage, tea (for during the last fifteen years of his life he never tasted alcoholic drinks of any kind), perhaps reading "Tom Jones" for the tenth time, or enjoying one of Congreve's comedies, or Rousseau's "Confessions," or writing, in his large flowing hand, a dozen pages of the essay "On Persons one would Wish to have Seen," or "On Living to One's Self." One cannot imagine any retreat more consonant with the feelings of this lonely thinker, during one of his periods of seclusion, than the out-of-the-world place in which I stood. In winter-time it must have been desolate beyond description—on wild nights especially,—"heaven's chancel-vault" blind with sleet—the fierce wind sweeping down from the bare wolds around, and beating furiously against the doors and windows of the unsheltered hostelry.

The essays in *Table-Talk* contain much vigorous thinking, many fine bursts of eloquence, and tender reminiscences of past days and bygone moods of mind. It is almost invidious to point out particular papers, but I cannot refrain from naming—"On Going a Journey," "The Love of Life," "The Fear of Death," "On People with One Idea," "Why Distant Objects Please," "The Past and Future," "The Indian Jugglers." The essay "On Living to One's Self" is in his best manner, and is steeped in intense recollection of his past life. The author's own early aspirations and toils after eminence in art as a painter are gathered up and embalmed in his essay "On the Pleasures of Painting," which is full of pathos and tender beauty; the spirit of long-crushed hope breathes throughout its pages.

In 1820 Hazlitt's father died, an old man of eighty-four. His son was not in London at the time, and his habits were so erratic and his movements so uncertain, that nobody knew where to address him, and he thus remained in ignorance of the event until after the

funeral. About the same time, Mrs. Hazlitt the elder lost her mother, at the extreme age of ninety-nine. Her portrait was taken by John Hazlitt when she was ninety-six. The Rev. Mr. Hazlitt left four volumes of sermons. He was a correspondent of Dr. Priestley. His widow, born in 1746, lived to witness the accession of Queen Victoria. It is probable that Hazlitt had his good father in his mind when he wrote the striking passage, beginning, "But we have known some such in happier days," &c. (see Selections—"Dissenting Ministers," page 89.)

The reception by the press and the public of Hazlitt's productions during the previous few years was highly favourable. An exception, however, must be made in the case of *Blackwood's Magazine*, the *Quarterly Review* (then edited by Gifford), and some of the Government journals of the period, which attacked him with an animosity and unscrupulous malignity almost incredible to the present generation. His crime in the eyes of these writers was that he was an uncompromising reformer, and that in some of his political effusions he had exposed the abuses of the Government, denouncing things and systems to which he was conscientiously opposed in terms not to be mistaken. Granted that his political sympathies were ardent and the expression of them often vehement, and that he had taken the unfashionable side, wilfully placing himself from the first in collision with all the interests that were in the sunshine of the world, and with all the persons that were then all-powerful in England; surely the intrinsic ability of his purely literary works might have been acknowledged and their merits admitted. He himself never failed to do justice to the intellectual gifts of opponents, however keenly he may have attacked their political opinions and tergiversations. Witness what he always said of the genius of such men as Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, and Scott. It is never without a sad feeling, akin to regret, that he attacks what he considers their backslidings, and launches against them his invective and sarcasm. But he never carried poisoned arrows into political conflict. In his bitterest remarks upon the changed opinions of Coleridge and Wordsworth, he makes you feel how much they were once rooted in his affection, and that, in spite of their differences, he can never cease to admire their genius. Such was his chivalrous sense of honour and justice. His example in this respect was not followed by his enemies and assailants. The merits of his works and the recognition of his literary powers were systematically ignored by the writers in the Government interest,

and the author was deliberately held up to public odium and disgust. He was denounced as an incendiary, a Radical, a Bonapartist, a man of loose morals, and a Cockney scribbler, the friend and companion of Leigh Hunt, the editor of the *Examiner*, who was always attacking the Government—a man equally obnoxious and hateful. The object of this literary ruffianism was to disparage the writer and prevent the public from reading his works. These shameless attacks had the desired effect of blighting his credit with the publishers and seriously limiting the circulation of his books, and in one instance entirely stopping the sale of one of his works from the day on which the malignant article appeared. His friend Leigh Hunt was subjected to the same scandalous treatment, and with similar results. The public mind was in this way extensively poisoned with regard to these two writers and men of genius, thus causing a much tardier recognition of their merits in influential quarters than would otherwise have been the case. In order to justify the strong expressions used by me, it may be stated that I have carefully read the various articles referred to, and could, if necessary, produce a selection of passages which would stand unparalleled in the annals of criticism for their gross violation of the laws and decencies of literary warfare. To such lengths did party feeling go in those days! Let us rejoice that this style of criticism has gone by, never to return. The most violent political partisan of the present day would shrink from using such weapons. It is with pleasure I record the fact that the *Quarterly Review*, nearly fifty years after the date of these attacks, gave utterance, through the pen of Bulwer, to a most generous recognition of the genius of Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt. It may also be stated, in justice to *Blackwood's Magazine*, that, fifteen years later, Wilson made the *amende honorable* to Hunt in a graceful and touching passage in one of the "Noctes," the concluding words of which were: "The animosities are mortal, the humanities live for ever." He even invited him to write for the Magazine; but Hunt declined the offer.

Mention has already been made of the want of sympathy between Hazlitt and his wife, and of the qualities and peculiarities in each which stood in the way of their domestic happiness. "Never," says his grandson, "was there a worse-matched pair. If they had not happened to marry, if they had continued to meet at the Lambs', as of old, or at her brother's, they would have remained probably the best of friends. She would have appreciated better his attainments and genius, . . . but there was a sheer want of sympathy

from the first set-out. They married after studying each other's characters very little, and observing very little how their tempers were likely to harmonise. . . . I believe that Mr. Hazlitt was physically incapable of giving his affections to a single object. . . . His wife had not much pretence for quarrelling with him on the ground of former attachments still lingering in his thoughts, and keeping his affections in a state of tangle, for she too had had her little love affairs, and accepted him only when her other suitors broke faith." This want of sympathy between them and alienation of feeling kept increasing, and their uncomfortable relations grew more and more distasteful to both. For some time they had been living apart—he often by himself at Winterslow Hutt, or in lodgings in town.

About this time (1822) he became the subject of a singular and infatuated attachment. He was violently smitten with the beauty of Sarah Walker, daughter of a tailor in Southampton Buildings, at whose house he lodged. It was a sort of frenzy of platonic devotion. Hazlitt was in a state of hallucination about her beauty and moral excellence. The amazing thing about it was that his insane enthusiasm so over-mastered him and carried him off his balance, that he could not help speaking about it to every one he knew. This unfortunate infatuation took entire possession of him, and he was completely carried away by it. He was really in a condition of mind in which he could scarcely be considered a responsible being. His son, in the biographical sketch prefixed to his father's "Literary Remains," speaks of the divorce of his father and mother, and refers to the painful incident of this infatuated attachment in the following sensible words:—"It was in 1823 that a circumstance occurred, the influence of which on my father's public as well as private life obliges me to advert to it, although other reference than a bare record of the fact is as unnecessary to the reader as it would be painful to me. About this period, then, my father and mother were divorced under the law of Scotland. Their union had for some years past failed to produce that mutual happiness which was its object, owing in great measure to an imagined and most unfounded idea on my father's part of a want of sympathy on that of my mother. For some time previous to this my father had fallen into an infatuation which he has himself illustrated in glowing and eloquent language in a regretted publication called 'Liber Amoris.' The subject is a painful one, and admits of but one cheerful consolation—that my father's name

and character were but momentarily dimmed by what indeed was but a momentary delusion."

The book referred to appeared in 1823 under the title of *Liber Amoris, or the New Pygmalion.* In it he records his conversations with this imaginary goddess of his admiration, who in the eyes of every one but himself was a very common-place person. One of his critics spoke of the book as a most remarkable psychological curiosity, and one of the most signal examples extant of the power of a genuine passion, not merely to palliate what was wrong, but to dignify what was ridiculous. A lady critic says of this passage in Hazlitt's life, that "it is enough that no vicious or sensual man could have fallen into such fascination, nor any decently hypocritical one have proclaimed it." De Quincey called it "an explosion of frenzy. He threw out his clamorous anguish to the clouds, and to the winds, and to the air; caring not who might listen, who might sympathise, or who might sneer—the sole necessity for him was to empty his over-burdened spirit." A philosophical critic of the book calls it a novelty in the English language, and says that he is not aware of the publication of anything so vindicatory of the ideal theory of Berkeley —nothing so approaching a demonstration *that mind is the great creator*, and *matter a fable.* Mrs. Jameson has a very eloquent passage on the subject in one of her volumes. The late Lord Houghton incidentally expressed his great admiration of the book in an article on Keats in the *Fortnightly Review.* Before leaving this painful subject, it will be well to give a few sentences from the pen of Bryan Waller Procter, better known by his *nom de plume* Barry Cornwall, who knew Hazlitt well, met him at this time, and who had seen the girl at his (H.'s) lodgings. "His intellect was completely subdued by an insane passion. He was, for a time, unable to think or talk of anything else. He abandoned criticism and books as idle matters, and fatigued every person whom he met by expressions of her love, of her deceit, and of his own vehement disappointment. This was when he lived in Southampton Buildings, Holborn. Upon one occasion I know that he told the story of his attachment to five different persons in the same day, and at each time entered into minute details of his love-story. 'I am a cursed fool,' said he to me. 'I saw J—— going into Wills' Coffee-house yesterday morning; he spoke to me. I followed him into the house, and whilst he lunched I told him the whole story. Then I wandered into the Regent's Park, where I met one of M——'s sons. I walked with him some time, and on his using

some civil expression, by Jove, sir, I told him the whole story!' [Here he mentioned another instance which I forget.] 'Well, sir' (he went on), 'I then went and called on Haydon, but he was out. There was only his man, Salmon, there; but by Jove! I could not help myself. It all came out; the whole cursed story. Afterwards I went to look at some lodgings at Pimlico. The landlady at one place, after some explanations as to rent, &c., said to me very kindly, "I am afraid you are not well, sir?" "No, ma'am," said I, "I am not well;" and on inquiring further, the devil take me if I did not let out the whole story from beginning to end.' I used to see this girl, Sarah Walker, at his lodgings, and could not account for the extravagant passion of her admirer. She was the daughter of the lodging-house-keeper. Her face was round and small, and her eyes were motionless, glassy, and without any speculation (apparently) in them. Her movements in walking were very remarkable, for I never observed her to make a step. She went onwards in a sort of wavy, sinuous manner, like the movement of a snake. She was silent, or uttered monosyllables only, and was very demure. Her steady, unmoving gaze upon the person whom she was addressing was exceedingly unpleasant. The Germans would have extracted a romance from her, endowing her perhaps with some diabolic attribute. To this girl he gave all his valuable time, all his wealth of thought, and all the loving frenzy of his heart. For a time I think that on this point he was substantially insane—certainly beyond self-control. To him she was a being full of witchery, full of grace, with all the capacity of tenderness. The retiring coquetry, which had also brought others to her, invested her in his sight with the attractions of a divinity." I have not given any extracts from this work, as, from the nature of its contents, it would be impossible to convey a correct idea of it by detached passages.

With regard to the divorce mentioned by his son in the extract given above, both parties went to Edinburgh, swore that there was no collusion between them, and, after considerable delay, obtained their object. A detailed account of the whole transaction, including extracts from Mrs. Hazlitt's diary, is given in his grandson's Memoir. It is difficult to understand how the affair was carried through with so much coolness, and how husband and wife, so soon to be divorced, could meet as they did on terms of apparent friendship; how they could drink tea together, arrange as to the payment of her expenses, and deal with each other, all through, as if the matter about which they had met in Edinburgh was one of the most ordinary and everyday character.

In 1822–23 five articles by Hazlitt appeared in the *Liberal*, a periodical started by Lord Byron and Shelley, and to which Leigh Hunt was also a contributor. It only extended to four numbers. Byron's "Vision of Judgment" and "Heaven and Earth, a Mystery," first appeared in it. Hazlitt's contributions were "My First Acquaintance with Poets," "Arguing in a Circle," "On the Scotch Character," "Pulpit Oratory—Chalmers and Irving," and "On the Spirit of Monarchy."

In 1823 he issued a little volume called *Characteristics in the Manner of Rochefoucauld's Maxims.* The book is less known than almost any of his writings. Mr. R. H. Horne, in his introductory remarks to the second edition (1837), says that it contains much that is cynical, though nothing malevolent. Some of his most bitter sarcasms are distinctly levelled at himself. In his most cutting truths it is a striking peculiarity with him that he always brings himself in for his full share. There is stuff alone in this little volume to make a reputation. To the latest edition of *Characteristics*, (1871), are added "Common-Places," reprinted from Hunt's *Literary Examiner* (1823), and "Trifles Light as Air" from the *Atlas* newspaper (1829).

In 1824 Mr. Hazlitt contributed to the seventh edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* an article on *The Fine Arts*, afterwards reprinted with the title *Painting and the Fine Arts, being the articles contributed under these heads to the seventh edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica, by B. R. Haydon, Esq., and William Hazlitt, Esq.* A critic writing on this essay says, that if he wished to give any young or uninstructed individual a correct and exalted idea of what is meant by the term "The Arts" or "The Fine Arts," he would simply place it in his hands. The whole tendency of the paper is to show that the perfection attained by all the great masters arose from the study of the nature which surrounded them, and not from that imagined improvement upon nature which has been called the ideal.

In the same year, 1824, appeared *Sketches of the Principal Picture-Galleries in England, with a Criticism on "Marriage-à-la-Mode."* In no department of criticism did Hazlitt write with more insight, power, and picturesqueness than on painting and pictures. Leigh Hunt considered him the greatest critic on art that ever appeared ("his writings on that subject casting a light like a painted window"). Some of the opening sketches prefixed to his descriptions of the galleries of Dulwich, Stafford House, Burleigh, and

Blenheim are as charming as the best pictures they celebrate. The volume is full of beauties, although it seems to be written carelessly, and often in too dazzling language. The reader will find in it his account of the Cartoons of Raphael, of Rembrandt's picture of Joseph's Dream, his estimate of Holbein, of Poussin, and Watteau. His description of the Stafford Collection is prefaced by some striking observations on the duration of works of art. In his account of the pictures at Burleigh House there is a passage redolent with associations of the past, and embodying his recollections of a visit twenty years before, which may be pointed out as one of the most tender and eloquent he ever wrote. It is only one of several to be found in this volume. It may be here mentioned that a volume containing almost all that Hazlitt has written on the Fine Arts, including his sketches of the English Picture-Galleries, has been edited by his grandson, Mr. W. C. Hazlitt, and published by Messrs. Reeves & Turner.

Having got rid of his wife by divorce, according to the law of Scotland in those days, and having recovered from his mad infatuation for his lodging-house-keeper's daughter, who, it is almost superfluous to say, not long afterwards married a younger and less imaginative lover, he astonished his family and friends by very soon making a second marriage. In one of his many journeyings from and to London he made the acquaintance in a coach of a lady with some property, named Bridgwater. It is not reported how much time elapsed between the first meeting and their marriage, but the latter took place in the first half of 1824. In August of the same year they started on a trip to the Continent, during which his son, then a lad of about fourteen or fifteen, joined them. For some months they travelled about, visiting Paris, Turin, Florence, Rome, Venice, Milan, Geneva, and by the Rhine to Holland. During this tour he had opportunities of studying the Italian masters, and described them, as well as the places he visited, in a series of letters to the *Morning Chronicle*. He returned to London without his wife, who never afterwards rejoined him. Those who might be expected to give any information as to the cause of this abrupt termination of the brief period of his second married life are silent, and we are left to form our own conclusions. All we are told by Mr. W. C. Hazlitt is this: "Mr. Hazlitt and his son returned home alone. Mrs. Hazlitt had stopped behind. At the end of a fortnight he wrote to her, asking her when he should come to fetch her; and the answer which he got was that she had proceeded to Switzerland with her

sister, and that they had parted for ever." A writer on Hazlitt—Mr. Saintsbury—says very justly of this matter, "When a man with such antecedents marries a woman of whom no one has anything bad to say, lives with her for a year, chiefly on her money, and is then quitted by her with the information that she will have nothing more to do with him, it is not, I think, uncharitable to conjecture that most of the fault is his."

The letters he wrote while on his journey were published the following year (1826) in a volume entitled *Notes of a Journey in France and Italy*. This memorial of travel is full of enjoyment, observation, and thought. His conversation was described by one who fell in with him on the journey as being better than any book on the art pictorial he had ever read. His local descriptions—the passage across the Alps, his sketches of Swiss and Italian scenery, of Rome, Venice, and the Italian cities—are conspicuous for their vividness. The productions of some of the great Italian masters are criticised with his usual skill and felicity. The opinions of a man so eminently qualified to judge in such matters were read with attention and interest. This volume has never been reprinted.

We get a glimpse of Hazlitt during this journey in a forgotten article in an early volume of *Fraser's Magazine* (March 1839). It is written by Captain Medwin, the friend and biographer of Shelley. The article is entitled "Hazlitt in Switzerland: A Conversation." Medwin, who does not tell us how he came to meet Hazlitt, begins by saying that he found him living in a cottage near Vevay, on the Lake of Geneva. He describes him as by no means striking in appearance, though not unprepossessing—his dress neglected, his face unshaven. His countenance bore the marks of intense application, and there was such a habitual expression of melancholy, as though he was brooding over past miseries or indulging in hopeless views of the future. His figure was emaciated and his vital energy apparently very low. His body seemed only a tenement for spirit. A conversation ensued, the substance of which is given in five or six pages. It was about Byron, Scott, Shakespeare, and other literary topics. At its conclusion he entered into a long history of his own literary wrongs, his neglect by the public, and his bitter persecution by the reviewers. The chord, thus touched, vibrated in every nerve, and he spoke for half an hour with much rapidity, and with an attempt at times to suppress his feelings, which was distressing to both. At last, working himself up into a fury, he poured

forth the fiercest diatribes against his assailants. Medwin tried to calm him, and then took his leave.

In 1824 he prepared a volume, *Selections from the English Poets.* In this he was assisted by Lamb and Procter. Some poets (chiefly living), whose works were copyright, were included in the collection. An injunction being threatened, the volume was withdrawn from sale. A few, however, got into circulation, one of which is in my possession. In its original form, it extended to 822 royal octavo double columns. It was issued in 1825 with a new title and frontispiece, and consisted of 562 pages, with his name on the title-page. The authors not included in the re-issue are Rogers, Campbell, Bloomfield, Crabbe, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, Scott, Lamb, Montgomery, Byron, Moore, Hunt, Shelley, Thurlow, Keats, Milman, Bowles, and Barry Cornwall. The selections are preceded by brief, pithy, and comprehensive paragraphs, describing the characteristics of each poet. In his preface he says: "I have made it my aim to exhibit the characteristic and striking features of English poetry and English genius; and with this view have endeavoured to give such specimens from each author as showed his peculiar powers of mind, and the peculiar style in which he excelled."

In 1825 was published in one volume *The Spirit of the Age, or Contemporary Portraits.* This work is regarded by some of Hazlitt's critics as his best—the most matured in thought, the most impartial and deliberate in judgment, and the most finished in style. One calls it "The Harvest Home" of his mind; another says that in the delicate discrimination of the finer shades of character, and in those evanescent forms of expression which an inferior artist might in vain attempt to catch, he is the Clarendon of his age. He gives portraits of Coleridge, Scott, Wordsworth, Byron, Brougham, and a dozen more of his distinguished contemporaries, both political and literary. The portrait of Byron is a masterpiece of analysis of that poet's wayward genius and character. The character of Cobbett, considered by many of Hazlitt's admirers as one of the best pieces he ever wrote, and which originally appeared in *Table-Talk* in 1822, is not given in the first edition of *The Spirit of the Age*, but appears in the third, edited by his son, 1835, and in subsequent editions.

The Plain-Speaker; Opinions on Books, Men, and Things, 2 vols., 1826, was the next work which he gave to the public. These essays present a great variety of subjects discussed in Hazlitt's best manner. The titles of some of them have only to be named to whet the appetite of the reader. "Whether Genius is Conscious of its Powers,"

"On Application to Study," "On Reading Old Books," "On People of Sense," "On Depth and Superficiality," "On Personal Character," "On the Qualifications Necessary to Success in Life," and many more. The volume includes the most of the articles he contributed to the *London Magazine* in 1820 and 1821. Talfourd has pronounced these as well as most his previous essays "to differ not so much in degree as in kind from that of all others of their class. There is a weight and substance about them which makes us feel that, amidst all their dexterous analysis, they are in no small measure creations. The quantity of thought which is accumulated upon his favourite subjects, the variety and richness of the illustrations, and the strong sense of beauty and pleasure which pervades and animates the composition, give them a place, if not above, yet apart from, the writings of all other essayists. They have not, indeed, the dramatic charm of the old *Spectator* and *Tatler*, nor the airy touch with which Addison and Steele skimmed along the surface of many-coloured life; but they disclose the subtle essence of character, and trace the secret springs of the affections, with a more learned and penetrating spirit of human dealing than either of these essayists."

The work above described was the last collection of essays given by Mr. Hazlitt to the public. His son afterwards gathered together and published two volumes of essays contributed to various periodicals, and not included in *Table-Talk* or *The Plain-Speaker*. They will be found indispensable companions to these collections. It is well, therefore, to give a brief account of these before proceeding to describe the last two works from his pen, his *Conversations with Northcote* and the *Life of Napoleon*. The two collections of essays referred to are entitled *Sketches and Essays, now first collected by his son*, 1839; *Winterslow; Essays and Characters, written there, collected by his son*, 1850. In these two volumes will be found his memorable paper, "My First Acquaintance with Poets" (which, in its complete form, first appeared in "The Liberal" in 1823), his brilliant record of a conversation at one of Lamb's evenings, under the title "Of Persons One would Wish to have Seen," and the touching essays entitled "On a Sun-Dial" and "A Farewell to Essay-Writing," written at Winterslow Hutt in 1828. There are also included his characters of Burke, Fox, Pitt, and Chatham, written in his earlier days, and reprinted from *The Eloquence of the British Senate*. Besides those named, there are twenty-seven other essays, each stamped with the mint-mark of his genius, and which will be welcome to all lovers

of English literature. Indeed, these two volumes include specimens of Hazlitt as an essayist at his very best. In them we recognise the familiar hand of the acute, wilful, unselfish, benevolent philosopher; his unfailing sympathy with mankind at large, doing justice to the good as well as bad sides of a question, and heartily relishing beauty and genius wherever he found them,—enemies not excepted. It may here be stated that in *Hazlitt's Literary Remains*, edited by his son, 1836, will be found several essays not included in either of the posthumous volumes named, nor in any of those published during Hazlitt's lifetime. Among these is the memorable article "The Fight," describing the pugilistic encounter between Hickman and Neate in 1822 with marvellous vividness, and with an apparent skill which would almost make one suppose that Hazlitt was an "old hand" in that line,—a professional describer of prize-fights for a sporting newspaper. I have been advised not to reprint this paper, but Hazlitt must be shown in every phase; an ardent admirer pronounces it his *chef-d'œuvre*.

In 1827 Hazlitt contributed an article to the *Examiner* entitled "The Dandy School." It was written soon after the appearance of "Vivian Grey" (not then published with Disraeli's name as author), about which the fashionable world was then in ecstasies of admiration. As this article has never been reprinted, it is deserving of notice here. In it he exposed the low aims of the novelist in his usual incisive style, indignantly protested against the degradation of the functions of literature by such writers as the author of "Vivian Grey" and Theodore Hook, and treated with wholesome scorn the views of life and society embodied in the adventures and conversations of their tuft-hunting heroes.

In 1826-27 a series of articles under the title of "Boswell Redivivus" appeared in the *New Monthly Magazine*. These articles consist of a record of conversations with Mr. Northcote, the painter, then about eighty years of age, whom Hazlitt had known so far back as 1802 through his brother John. Northcote was a shrewd observer, and had seen and heard a great deal in the world of art and literature. He had great vivacity, plenty of anecdote, and many recollections of people whom he had known. These attractions drew Hazlitt frequently to his studio. He was generally considered an ill-conditioned, malevolent, and unamiable man, and it is rather singular that Hazlitt had so strong a relish for his society. He says: "The person whose doors I enter with most pleasure, and quit with the most regret, never did me the smallest favour. I once did

him an uncalled-for service, and we nearly quarrelled about it. If I were in the utmost distress, I should just as soon think of asking his assistance as of stopping a person on the highway. Practical benevolence is not his *forte*. . . . His hand is closed; but what of that? His eye is ever open, and reflects the universe. His silver accents, beautiful, venerable as his silver hairs, but not scanted, flow as a river. I never ate or drank in his house; nor do I know or care how the flies or spiders fare in it, or whether a mouse can get a living. But I know that I can get there what I can get nowhere else—a welcome, as if one was expected to drop in just at that moment, a total absence of all respect of persons, and of airs of self-consequence, refined thoughts, made more striking by ease and simplicity of manner—the husk, the shell of humanity is left at the door, and the spirit, mellowed by time, resides within! . . . I asked leave to write down one or two of these conversations; he said I might if I thought it worth while; 'but,' he said, 'I do assure you that you overrate them. You have not lived long enough in society to be a judge.' . . . I have generally taken him as my lay-figure or model, and worked upon it, *selon mon gré*, by fancying how he would express himself on any occasion, and making up a conversation according to this preconception in my mind. I have also introduced little incidental details that never happened; thus, by lying, giving a greater air of truth to the scene—an art understood by most historians! In a word, Mr. Northcote is only answerable for the wit, sense, and spirit there may be in these papers; I take all the dulness, the impertinence, and malice upon myself. He has furnished the text. I fear I have often spoiled it by the commentary." We are told by Mr. Patmore that in one of these conversations Hazlitt reported something which Northcote said should not have been printed. Northcote was furious, and spoke of Hazlitt as "the diabolical Hazlitt," and wrote indignantly to the editor of the *New Monthly*, in which the articles were appearing. The editor replied that Hazlitt should never again write in the Magazine. Notwithstanding this explosion, they continued to meet as before, the latter taking notes with Northcote's knowledge, and the conversations continuing to appear in the Magazine. These conversations contain much fine thought and practical wisdom; many of the thoughts are strikingly original. The respective shares of author and artist are not always easy to determine. It was said by one critic of these conversations that all the ill-nature in the book is Northcote's, and all, or almost all, the talent Hazlitt's.

The work was not published in volume form until 1830. Its title is *Conversations of James Northcote, Esq., R.A.* In the same year was issued *The Life of Titian; with Anecdotes of the Distinguished Persons of his Time, by James Northcote, Esq., R.A.* Although this work bears the name of Mr. Northcote on its title-page, the material furnished by him was of a very unconnected kind, and only made available (with the addition of a great many notes) by Hazlitt's manipulation. To swell out the work into two volumes, a translation of Ticozzi's Life of Titian, by Hazlitt and his son, was introduced.

It now remains to speak of his last and largest work, *The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte*, 4 vols. Vols. I. and II. 1828. Vols. III. and IV. 1830. New edition, revised by his son, 4 vols. 1852. This Life had loomed before his view for many years, and he meant it to be a monumental work. During 1827 he worked upon his cherished task at Winterslow Hutt. The first volume and the greater part of the second were finished and ready for printing, when he was taken ill, and had to return to London for medical advice. In the following year the first two volumes were issued, and the author went on perseveringly with the remaining two volumes. His strength was visibly declining, and he was anxious to complete his task. We are told that the finishing touches were put to the last two volumes under the roof of Mr. Whiting, the printer, of Beaufort House, in the Strand. The concluding volumes were sent forth to the public in 1830. The sale of the first two volumes had not been encouraging. Coming after Sir Walter Scott's work on the same subject was a serious disadvantage, and interfered with the success of the book. He was to have received £500 for the copyright, but his publisher's affairs became involved, and the result was that he received no recompense for this laboriously and conscientiously performed work. This led to a pecuniary crisis, disastrous in its issue to Hazlitt, bringing with it the greatest inconvenience and annoyance. His health and spirits suffered much under this misfortune. In the beginning of 1830 he removed to 6 Frith Street, Soho, and there he was threatened with a recurrence of his previous serious illness. The Preface, which he intended to appear at the commencement of the Life, was for some reason or other omitted, but it found a place at the beginning of the third volume—not standing by itself, but incorporated with and forming part of the text. He himself, writing about this Preface, says in a letter to Mr. Charles Cowden Clarke: "In Paris the Preface was thought a masterpiece, the best

and only possible defence of Buonaparte, and quite new *there*." Talfourd, in his "Thoughts upon the Intellectual Character of William Hazlitt," devotes several pages to an ingenious explanation of his admiration of Napoleon. One of Hazlitt's reasons for justifying this predilection to himself was no doubt the revolutionary origin of his hero, and the contempt with which he trampled upon the claims of legitimacy and humbled the pride of kings; but Talfourd points out other reasons, arising from the constitution of Hazlitt's mind, which help us to understand this idolatrous worship. He does not speak with unqualified admiration of the work. He considers it as often confused and spiritless, although "redeemed by scattered thoughts of true originality and depth," and descriptions, "written with a master's hand," such as that of the disastrous retreat from Moscow. At times "the author's strength becomes concentrated, his narrative assumes an epic dignity and fervour, and glows with 'the long-resounding march and energy divine.'" Mr. Fonblanque, one of the most acute of our political writers, and whose judgments are always characterised by discrimination and fairness, in a review of this work in the *Examiner*, says, "With respect to the narrative, it is rapid, spontaneous, and abounding with the mental touches which so peculiarly distinguish this writer; although it certainly wants something of form and due digestion regarded as the record of a series of great actions and important events. To Napoleon, as a man of commanding intellect, Mr. Hazlitt will, by some, be considered too favourable. It is much to say, however, that in no instance does he spare him when either his grand characteristics or his passions bring him into opposition to the great cause of liberty or the general benefit of mankind. . . . There is a noble and eloquent exposition of the inevitable results of a free press, which is admirably demonstrative of the utter inability, from the constitution and nature of the human mind, of an eternal resistance on the part of oppression and tyranny to the operation of the interchange of ideas which it produces. . . . We will venture to assert that this work displays a deeper insight into the sources and principles of morals and politics, in brief, rapid, and lightning glances—often as it were *en passant*—than nine out of ten of the formal treatises which are regarded as profound authority. We would rather, for instance, be the author of the remarks therein on the character of Robespierre and the Reign of Terror, than of the whole of Burke's great and high-wrought work."

Before concluding the record of Hazlitt's works, I may direct

attention to two papers of his, hitherto unreprinted, which appeared the year after his death. They may be of interest to those who wish to know his opinion on the subjects discussed, viz., "The Punishment of Death" and "The Emancipation of the Jews." The latter will be found in the *Tatler*, March 28, 1831, and the former in *Fraser's Magazine*, January 1831. I may also add that two articles from his pen were written a few months before his death, and appeared in the *New Monthly Magazine*. They were entitled "The Free Admission" and "The Sick Chamber." The latter will be found in the following Selections; they have not been included in any of the volumes of his collected Essays.

Pecuniary anxieties and disappointments bore heavily upon him during 1830, and he grew gradually feebler. The stirring events in France in July of that year seemed to give him new life for a while, and came to him in his shattered condition like a sudden and unexpected gleam of sunshine. By the tender care of some of his friends he seemed to rally slightly at times, but in the course of the summer he grew weaker and worse. Still he was able to think and write a little. His grandson tells us that he composed a paper on "Personal Politics," in view of the then recent deposition of Charles X. and the overthrow of the Bourbon dynasty. It was something to have lived to see *that*. "I saw him (once only)," says his friend Procter, "as he lay, ghastly, shrunk, and helpless, on the bed from which he never afterwards rose. His mind seemed to have weathered all the danger of extreme sickness, and to be safe and as strong as ever. But the physical portion had endured sad decay. He could not lift his hand from the coverlet; and his voice was changed, and diminished to a hoarse whistle, resembling the faint scream that I have heard from birds. I never was so sensible of the power of Death before." All through the month of August he was struggling with death. He seemed to live on "by a pure act of volition." He asked those who were with him to fetch his mother to him, that he might see her once more before he died. But this was impossible; she was in Devonshire and eighty-four years of age. His old and ever-dear friend, Charles Lamb, was beside him at the close, on the 18th of September. The end was so peaceful, that his son, who was sitting by his bedside, did not know that he had passed away till the breathing had ceased for a moment or two. The last words he uttered were, "Well, I've had a happy life." Let it be recorded to the honour of Francis Jeffrey that he sent Hazlitt £50, in reply to an application made from his

sick-bed, but the kind gift did not arrive until after his death. Mr. R. H. Horne says that those who nursed him and cared for him during his last illness were Charles Lamb, Mr. Patmore (father of the poet), and Mr. Basil Montagu. "I brought an Italian artist, who took an admirable plaster cast from Hazlitt's face and the upper part of his head. The countenance was grandly taken. It had a latent smile, not unlike that which gradually dawns upon one after gazing for a time at some faces of the Egyptian sculptures." Wells, the author of "Joseph and his Brethren," went with Horne to see the body. He had at one time been intimate with Hazlitt. He afterwards raised a tablet to his memory in the Church of St. Anne's, Soho, where he lies buried. The inscription on the tablet is a long one, and will be found in the "Literary Remains."

"When Hazlitt died," said Bulwer, "he left no successor; others may equal him, but none resemble. I confess that few deaths of the great writers of my time ever affected me more painfully than his. For of most of those who, with no inferior genius, have gone before him, it may be said that in their lives they tasted the sweets of their immortality, they had their consolations of glory; and if fame can atone for the shattered nerve, the jaded spirit, the wearied heart of those 'who scorn delight and live laborious days,' verily they have their reward. But Hazlitt went down to the dust without having won the crown for which he so bravely struggled; his reputation, great amongst limited circles, was still questionable to the world. He who had done so much for the propagation of thought, from whose wealth so many had filled their coffers, left no stir on the surface from which he sank to the abyss. . . . A great man sinking amidst the twilight of his own renown, after a brilliant and unclouded race, if a solemn, is an inspiring and elating influence. But Nature has no sight more sad and cheerless than the sun of a genius which the clouds have so long and drearily overcast, that there are few to mourn and miss the luminary when it sinks from the horizon."

Hazlitt as a Critic and Essayist.

As a critic and essayist, Hazlitt takes a deservedly high place in English literature. His writings bear upon them the impress of a vigorous and original genius. They are characterised by genuine eloquence and fine perception of every kind of beauty, by sincerity and earnestness, and for the most part, when disturbing influences

were not present, by an unerring critical judgment; and at times his page sparkles with epigrammatic brilliancy. His thoughts are expressed in vigorous, idiomatic, vivid, easy-flowing language. It is to be regretted that so few readers of the present day are acquainted with his works. There are several reasons for this. One of these reasons—upon which I have enlarged in the previous part of this Memoir—is the hostility directed against him during his lifetime by an influential class of critics, who were at the head of powerful literary organs on the Government side of politics. Hazlitt was an uncompromising politician. He was on the popular side, and evinced the most strenuous opposition to the existing Governments, at home and abroad. His thorough integrity, his denunciation of corruption and official servility, and his unswerving consistency, rendered him an object of hatred to the supporters of "things as they are;" and led to those personal attacks upon his works and literary character which undoubtedly injured his popularity as an author, and left behind them influences and prejudices which have not yet altogether ceased to act unfavourably upon his reputation. Another cause which has diminished his influence is the voluminousness of his writings. An author who has left so much behind him is at a disadvantage compared with one of equal power whose works are contained within a moderate compass. For twenty years he was constantly writing for his livelihood, and thus often compelled to the act of composition when his health and surroundings were anything but favourable to thought. His consciousness of intellectual power, assisted by unusual command of language, induced him to draw continually on his mental resources, leading in some of his writings to repetition, and to a certain egotistical tone, which his enemies knew how to turn to his disadvantage, and for which the ability and originality of other portions were not allowed to atone.

Hazlitt's writings abound in acute and eloquently expressed opinions on literature, art, life, and manners. No critic so thoroughly imparts to his readers the sense of his own enjoyment of genius, as well as reveals the process of it with such success. His critical judgments are sometimes warped by personal and political prejudices; but, with all their drawbacks, there are none superior to his in vigour and general truthfulness. Even when his judgments are at fault, they are hardly calculated to mislead the taste of the reader, from the ease with which it is perceived and referred to its source in caprice or a momentary fit of spleen. Hazlitt

infused an entirely new spirit into the criticism of his day. He showed that the way to comprehend a work was to enjoy it, and that just perception is closely allied to sympathy. If we trace the history of English criticism, we shall find that Hazlitt began a new era; and whatever may be our opinion of his estimates of individual writers and artists, it must be allowed that his way of treating their productions—that is, sympathisingly, and not merely in a conventional or prescriptive manner—is a great advance upon the previous methods of treatment. The word "critical" hardly conveys a true idea of his mode of dealing with the works and genius of great writers. It is a kind of treatment which had never before been attempted, or even dreamed of. It has been described as not so much an art cultivated, as a new and beautiful sphere of literature created, ministering wholly to refined enjoyment. He is less a writer than an illustrator, and less an illustrator than an enthusiastic expositor and panegyrist, whose eulogium is the spontaneous overflow of an exquisite perception of, and an intense sympathy with, the beauties on which he expatiates. His appreciation of literature and art was more earnest, suggestive, and discriminating than that of any critic of his time or before him; while his style was calculated to rivet attention by its remarkable clearness, fluency, and vigour, its warmth and richness of colouring. His knowledge of the fine arts, the drama, works of fancy and fiction, and other departments of literature, taken severally, may not equal that of some other writers, but taken altogether, is certainly unrivalled. His works are full of spirit and vivacity, and there is at the same time an intensity and vividness of conception which embodies ideas that are so volatile and fugitive as to escape the grasp of a slower, though even profounder intellect. He professes to throw aside the conventional formality of authorship, and to give his thoughts to the world with the freedom and frankness of Montaigne. He has fine sensibility, great imaginative power, remarkable acuteness of intellect, and a masterly gift of expression. His beauties are procured by a great expenditure of thinking, and some of his single strokes and flashes reveal more to the reader's understanding than whole pages of an ordinary author. He is one of the most suggestive of writers. There are few who make their readers think so much, and he is constantly putting us on the track of speculation or intellectual sympathy. He makes life interesting by hinting to us its latent significance, and he reveals the mysterious charm of character by analysing its elements and probing its inmost depth. Seldom have the inmost

experiences of an author been more completely revealed than in the case of Hazlitt. There are few salient points and startling passages in his life that he has omitted to look upon or glance at in his Essays. The processes and impressions of his own mind had such an interest for him, that he feels a delight in recording them and speculating on them. In treating of a work of art or a favourite author, he brought to bear on their interpretation all the sympathetic insight born of his own experience. He makes us acquainted with all his tastes and antipathies, his prejudices and passions. He reveals his errors and weaknesses, and is anything but a self-laudator. Indeed, authorship was to him a kind of confessional. It has been remarked that some of his best essays may be said to be in a sense autobiographical, because in them he recalls his enthusiasms and the passionate hopes on which he fed his spirit. Some of these apostrophes and references to his past life are not to be matched for tenderness and sad regret by anything in the range of literature. An American critic, alluding to this peculiarity of Hazlitt's—his indulgence in retrospective thought and self-revelation —says, "He was an epicurean in this regard, delighting to renew the vivid experience of the past by the glow of deliberate reminiscence, and to associate his best moods for work and his most genial studies with natural scenery and physical comfort. No writer ever more delicately fused sensation and sentiment, or drew from sunshine, fireside, landscape, air, viands, and vagabondage more delectable adjuncts."

The extreme wilfulness of his character often led him into the indulgence of strong prejudices and induced a fondness for paradox; but even his paradoxes often serve as admirable stimulants to thought. In an unreprinted essay of his in a newspaper in 1828, "On the Causes of Popular Opinion," he explains his love of paradox in this way: "All abstract reasoning is in extremes, or only takes up one view of a question, or what is called the principle of the thing; and if you want to give this popularity and effect, you are in danger of running into extravagance and hyperbole. I have had to bring out some obscure distinction, or to combat some strong prejudice, and in doing this with all my might, may have often overshot the mark. It was easy to correct the excess of truth afterwards."

He possessed a deep and earnest feeling for truth, which was indeed the guiding-star of all his thoughts and speculations. No truer words were ever spoken of him than those of Talfourd

when he says that "he had as passionate a desire for truth as others have for wealth, or power, or fame." His purpose was always pure and earnest, and no temptation could induce him to pervert or to conceal the faith that was in him. One of the most profitable results accruing from his critical writings is the intellectual zeal which they communicate, sending us to the writers on whom he is discoursing with a whetted appetite, eager to relish their beauties. So keen is his enjoyment of every trait of beauty and truth in literature and in life which forcibly strikes his imagination, so warm the feeling that pervades his thought, and so rich the colouring in which the thought is invested, that he at once makes captive our sympathies, and compels us "by his so potent art" to join in his admiration. One remarkable peculiarity in his writings is his love of quotation, which is always just, striking, and unmistakably felicitous. Emerson says, "We are as much informed of a writer's genius by what he selects as by what he originates. We read the quotation with his eyes, and find a new and fervent sense." Some of Hazlitt's essays were so studded with rich gems of thought, that the pages shine like cloth of gold. To the charges made by some of his critics that he was inconsistent, that he had a narrow range of ideas and repeated himself, and that he made personal attacks on his friends, he gives the following answer in a newspaper article which has never been reprinted:—"I have been accused of inconsistency for writing an essay, for instance, on the Advantages of Pedantry, and another on the Ignorance of the Learned, as if ignorance had not its comforts as well as knowledge. The personalities I have fallen into have never been gratuitous. If I have sacrificed my friends, it has always been to a theory. I have been found fault with for repeating myself, and for a narrow range of ideas. To a want of general reading I plead guilty, and am sorry for it; but perhaps if I had read more, I might have thought less. As to my barrenness of invention, I have at least glanced over a number of subjects—painting, poetry, prose, plays, politics, parliamentary speakers, metaphysical lore, books, men and things. There is some point, some fancy, some feeling, some taste, shown in treating of these. Which of my conclusions have been reversed? Is it what I said ten years ago of the Bourbons, which raised the war-whoop against me? Surely all the world are of that opinion now. I have then given proof of some talent, and of more honesty; if there is haste or want of method, there is no common-place, nor a line that licks the dust; and if I do not appear to more advantage,

I at least appear such as I am. . . . I hope to be acquitted of an absolute dearth of resources, and want of versatility in the direction of my studies."

Hazlitt's Personal Characteristics.

We have one or two descriptive accounts of Hazlitt by friends which enable us to form some notion of his personal appearance and ways. Talfourd describes him to have been "of the middle size, with a handsome and eager countenance, worn by sickness and thought, and dark hair, which had curled stiffly over the temples, and was only of late years sprinkled with grey. His gait was slouching and awkward, and his dress neglected; but when he began to talk, he could not be mistaken for a common man. In the company of persons with whom he was not familiar his bashfulness was painful; but when he became entirely at ease, and entered on a favourite topic, no one's conversation was ever more delightful. He did not talk for effect, to dazzle, or surprise, or annoy, but with the most simple and honest desire to make his view of the subject entirely apprehended by his hearer. There was sometimes an obvious struggle to do this to his own satisfaction; he seemed labouring to drag his thought to light from its deep lurking-place; and, with modest distrust of that power of expression which he had found so late in life, he often betrayed a fear that he had failed to make himself understood, and recurred to the subject again and again, that he might be assured he had succeeded. In argument he was candid and liberal; there was nothing about him pragmatical or exclusive." For many years previous to his death he abstained entirely from the use of alcoholic liquors, having found indulgence in them to be injurious to his health. We are told that the cheerfulness with which he made this resolution and adhered to it was one of the most amiable traits in his character. To give Talfourd's words, "He had no censure for others, who, with the same motive, were less wise or less resolute; nor did he think he had earned, by his own constancy, any right to intrude advice. . . . He avowed that he yielded to necessity; and instead of avoiding the sight of that which he could no longer taste, he was seldom so happy as when he sat with friends at their wine, participating in the sociality of the time, and renewing his own past enjoyment in that of his companions, without regret and without

envy. . . . In society, as in politics, he was no flincher. He loved 'to hear the chimes at midnight,' without considering them as a summons to rise. At these seasons, when in his happiest mood, he used to dwell on the conversational powers of his friends, and live over again the delightful hours he had passed with them, repeat the pregnant puns that one had made, tell over again a story with which another had convulsed the room, or expand in the eloquence of a third; always best pleased when he could detect some talent which was unregarded by the world, and giving alike to the celebrated and the unknown due honour."

Mr. Bryan Waller Procter (Barry Cornwall) saw a great deal of Hazlitt during the last twelve or thirteen years of his life, and has left on record his impressions of him. He first met him at supper at Leigh Hunt's. He expected to find a severe, defiant-looking being, instead of which he met a grave man, diffident, almost awkward in manner, whose appearance did not impress him with much respect. "He had a quick restless eye, however, which opened eagerly when any good or bright observation was made; and he found at the conclusion of the evening, that when any question arose, the most sensible reply always came from him. He had nothing that was parsimonious or mean in his character, and never thought of eating or drinking except when hunger or thirst reminded him of these wants. With the exception of a very rare dinner or supper with a friend or intimate, his time was generally spent alone. After a late breakfast he took his quire of foolscap paper, and commenced writing, in a large hand, almost as large as text, his day's work. There never was any rough draft or copy. He wrote readily—not very swiftly, but easily, as if he had made up his mind; and this was the manuscript that went to the printer. He was of the middle size, with eager, expressive eyes; near which his black hair, sprinkled sparsely with grey, curled round in a wiry, resolute manner. His grey eyes, not remarkable in colour, expanded into great expression when occasion demanded it. Being very shy, however, they often evaded your steadfast look. They never (as has been asserted by some one) had a sinister expression; but they sometimes flamed with indignant glances, when their owner was moved to anger; like the eyes of other angry men. At home his style of dress (or undress) was perhaps slovenly, because there was no one to please; but he always presented a very clean and neat appearance when he went abroad. His mode of walking was loose, weak, and unsteady, although his arms displayed strength, which he used to put forth when he played at

rackets with Martin Burney and others. He played in the old Fives Court (now pulled down), and occasionally exhibited impatience when the game went against him. The whole of many, and the half of more days, were consumed in this amusement. It was here that he witnessed the play at fives of the celebrated John Kavanagh, of whom he has written an account—at once an eulogy and an epitaph."

Mr. P. G. Patmore, who knew Hazlitt during the last sixteen or seventeen years of his life, devotes a large portion of the three volumes called "My Friends and Acquaintances" to recollections of him. From these the following sentences are taken :—"For depth, force, and variety of intellectual expression, a finer head and face than Hazlitt's were never seen. I speak of them when his countenance was not dimmed and obscured by illness, or clouded and deformed by those fearful indications of internal passion which he never even attempted to conceal. The expression of his face, when anything was said that seriously offended him, or when any peculiarly painful recollection passed across his mind, was truly awful —more so than can be conceived as within the capacity of the human countenance ; except perhaps by those who have witnessed Edmund Kean's last scene of Sir Giles Overreach from the front of the pit. But when he was in good health, and in a tolerable humour with himself and the world, his face was more truly and entirely answerable to the intellect that spoke through it than any other I ever saw, either in life or on canvas ; and its crowning portion, the brow and forehead, was, to my thinking, quite unequalled for mingled capacity and beauty. . . . The forehead, as I have hinted, was magnificent ; the nose precisely that (combining strength with lightness and elegance) which physiognomists have assigned as evidence of a fine and highly cultivated taste ; though there was a peculiar character about the nostrils, like that observable in those of a fiery and unruly horse. The mouth, from its ever-changing form and character, could scarcely be described, except as to its astonishingly varied power of expression, which was equal to, and greatly resembled, that of Edmund Kean. . . . He always lived (during the period of my intimacy with him) in furnished lodgings. . . . He usually rose at from one to two o'clock in the day—scarcely ever before twelve ; and, if he had no work in hand, he would sit over his breakfast (of excessively strong black tea and a toasted French roll) till four or five in the afternoon—silent, motionless, and self-absorbed, as a Turk over his opium-pouch ; for tea served him precisely in this capacity. It was the only stimulant he ever took, and

at the same time the only luxury; the delicate state of his digestive organs prevented him from tasting any fermented liquors, or touching any food but beef or mutton, or poultry or game. . . . A cup of his tea (if you happened to come in for the first brewage of it) was a peculiar thing; I have never tasted anything like it. He always made it himself, using with it a great quantity of sugar and cream. To judge from its occasional effects upon myself, I should say that the quantity he drank of this tea produced ultimately a most injurious effect upon him. . . . His breakfast and tea were frequently the only meals that he took till late at night, when he usually ate a hearty supper of hot meat. This he invariably took at a tavern. . . . Among the houses he frequented was the Southampton Coffee-House, in Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane. This he has immortalised in one of the most amusing of his essays, 'On Coffee-House Politicians.' Here, for several years, he used to hold a sort of evening levee, where, after a certain hour at night, he was always to be found, and always more or less ready to take part in that sort of desultory talk in which he excelled every man I have ever met with. Here, in that little bare and comfortless coffee-room, have I scores of times seen the daylight peep through the crevices of the window-shutters upon 'Table-Talk' that was worthy an intellectual feast of the gods. . . . With regard to his actual method of composition, he never thought for half an hour beforehand as to what he should say on any given subject, or even as to the general manner in which he should treat it. . . . The total want of premeditation with which he could produce, in a singularly short space of time, an essay full of acute or profound thought, copious, with various and novel illustrations, and perfectly original views, couched in terse, polished, vigorous, and epigrammatic language, was quite extraordinary, and is only to be explained by the two facts—first, that he never by choice wrote on any topic or question in which he did not, for some reason or other, feel a deep personal interest; and secondly, because on all questions on which he did so feel, he had thought, meditated, and pondered, in the silence and solitude of his own heart, for years and years before he ever contemplated doing more than thinking of them."

Estimates of Hazlitt.

Before bringing this Memoir to a close, it will be well to place on record a few estimates of Hazlitt's genius, writings, and character

from pens of recognised authority. They will serve as an example of the singular consensus of opinion regarding this remarkable writer among men of high literary reputation as well as of the most diverse intellectual gifts. They are selected from a large array of criticism that would fill a volume, including the names of De Quincey, Jeffrey, Leigh Hunt, John Forster, Albany Fonblanque, Miss Mitford, W. J. Fox, Ebenezer Elliot, Mrs. Jameson, George Gilfillan, Sir A. Alison, and many others. I give only seven, which will represent, as it were, in historical order, the best critical and general estimates of Hazlitt from the time of his death, nearly sixty years ago, down to the present day.

Foremost of all opinions regarding Hazlitt must be placed the beautiful and touching words of his oldest and best-beloved friend, Charles Lamb. They were written on an occasion when he felt bound to defend his friend against some remarks from a hostile quarter. Southey had paid Lamb a compliment at the expense of some of his companions, Hazlitt being included among them. At this time there had been a slight interruption of the friendship between them, arising from a misunderstanding on the part of Hazlitt. This did not matter to Lamb. He loved Hazlitt too well to allow any temporary ill-temper or waywardness on the part of the former to interfere with his affection and esteem for him, and he refused the proffered compliment at such a price. Lamb, with his fine sense of the weakness no less than of the strength of human nature, always made allowance for Hazlitt's errors and inconsistencies, treating them with a wise and just consideration. He always spoke freely of him, behind his back or before his face, but never disparagingly. In canvassing his faults of character, he always bore in mind, and called to mind in others, the rare and admirable qualities by which they were accompanied, and with which they were probably naturally linked. Hazlitt felt this, and it was the secret of his regard for Lamb. As the tribute to Hazlitt referred to was a public one, it at once put an end to the misunderstanding, and no cloud ever afterwards intervened between them. Lamb's words were these, and they will always stand as a noble record of his heart and intellect:—"I stood well with him for fifteen years (the proudest of my life), and have ever spoke my full mind of him to some to whom his panegyric must naturally be least tasteful. I never in thought swerved from him; I never betrayed him; I never slackened in my admiration for him; I was the same to him (neither better nor worse), though he could not see it, as in the days when he thought fit to trust me.

At this instant he may be preparing for me some compliment above my deserts, as he has sprinkled such among his admirable books, for which I rest his debtor; or, for anything I know or can guess to the contrary, he may be about to read a lecture on my weaknesses. He is welcome to them (as he was to my humble hearth), if they can divert a spleen or ventilate a fit of sullenness. I wish he would not quarrel with the world at the rate he does; but the reconciliation must be effected by himself, and I despair of living to see that day. But, protesting against much that he has written, and some things which he chooses to do; judging him by his conversations, which I enjoyed so long and relished so deeply, or by his books, in those places where no clouding passion intervenes—I should belie my own conscience if I said less than that I think W. H. to be, in his natural and healthy state, one of the wisest and finest spirits breathing. So far from being ashamed of that intimacy which was betwixt us, it is my boast that I was able for so many years to have preserved it entire; and I think I shall go to my grave without finding, or expecting to find, such another companion."

Next among these records of opinion regarding Hazlitt I place the following desultory remarks by Bryan Waller Procter, known in literature by the *nom de plume* of Barry Cornwall, and as the father of the poetess, Adelaide Procter. Procter was the intimate and esteemed friend of Hazlitt for sixteen or seventeen years before his death, and the companion of Lamb, Hunt, and other men of letters of the time. These remarks are little more than a rough draft, jotted down between his seventy-fifth and seventy-ninth years —mere memoranda for a more complete portrait which he contemplated. He died at the age of eighty-seven. He was a man of refined literary tastes and culture, and an accomplished writer both in prose and verse. He had a sound judgment and wide sympathies, and was capable of forming a sober and unexaggerated estimate of his contemporaries. Hence the value of his remarks on the subject of this Memoir.

"Justice has never been done, I think, to the great and varied talents of William Hazlitt. The opinion of the dominant party ('public opinion,' as it is called) was directed against him during his life, and that opinion has continued to prevail, amongst the unthinking and easy multitude, ever since. . . . Hazlitt himself had strong passions and a few prejudices; and his free manifestation of these were adduced as an excuse for the slander and animosity with which he was perpetually assailed. He attacked

others, indeed (a few only), and of these he expressed his dislike in terms sometimes too violent perhaps. . . . Yet, when an opportunity arose to require from him an unbiassed opinion, he was always just. . . . Subject to the faults arising out of this his warm temperament, he possessed qualities worthy of affection and respect. He was a simple, unselfish man, void of all deception and pretence; and he had a clear, acute intellect, when not traversed by some temporary passion or confused by a strong prejudice. Almost all men come to the consideration of a subject (not mathematical) with some prejudice or predilection. And even a prejudice, as Burke says, has its kernel (which should be preserved) as well as its husk (which should be cast aside). Like many others, he was sometimes swayed by his affections. He loved the first Napoleon beyond the bounds of reason. He loved the worker better than the idler. He hated pretensions supported merely by rank or wealth or repute, or by the clamour of factions. And he felt love and hatred in an intense degree. But he was never dishonest. He never struck down the weak nor trod on the prostrate. He was never treacherous, never tyrannical, never cruel. . . . The history of Hazlitt is like that of some of the scholars of former times, who were always face to face with misfortune. Merit (especially without prudence) is of insufficient strength to oppose injustice, which is always without pity. It seems to be a hopeless task to be always toiling up an ascent, where power and malignity united stand armed at the top. Then at one time he had ill-health, which added its weight to the constant obloquy with which he was assailed. To oppose this were the strength arising from a sense of injustice and the native vigour of his own soul. He had a grand masculine intellect, which conquered details as well as entireties, and rejected nothing which helped the understanding. . . . The decisions of a hostile majority pressed down (as I have said) the reputation of William Hazlitt, and no one has taken the trouble to elevate it to its proper position since. . . . Hazlitt's range of thought was very extensive. He wrote on books and men, on politics and manners. Metaphysics were not too remote from him, nor was the stage too trivial or too near. In his pages you may read of Berkeley and Hume, of Jeremy Taylor and Sir Thomas Browne. You may recreate yourself with Shakespeare and Milton, with Wordsworth, with Pope, and Lord Byron. He has commented on philosophers and divines, on tragedy and comedy, on poetry and politics, on morals, on manners, on style, on reasoning. . . .

Hazlitt's critical style, in all cases where he does not overwhelm it by elaborate eulogy, is strong, picturesque, and expressive. As a piece of eloquent writing, few passages in literature surpass his 'Introduction to the Literature of Elizabeth.' Leigh Hunt said, cleverly, that his 'criticisms on art threw a light on the subject as from a painted window.' . . . No man was competent to write upon Hazlitt who did not know him personally. Some things of which he has been accused were referable merely to temporary humour or irritability, which was not frequent, and which was laid aside in an hour. At other times (by far the greater portion of his life) he was a candid and reasonable man. He felt the injuries and slanders, however, which were spit forth upon him, acutely, and resented them. He was not one of those easy, comfortable, and so-called 'good-natured' men, who are simply inaccessible to strong emotions, and from whom the minor ills of life fall off, without disturbing them, like rain from a pent-house top. . . . His essays are full of thought; full of delicate perceptions. They do not speak of matters which he has merely seen or remembered, but enter into the rights and wrongs of persons; into the meaning and logic of things; into causes and results; into motives and indications of character. He is, in short, not a *raconteur*, but a reasoner. This will be observed in almost all his numerous essays. If he is often ostentatious, that is to say, if he accumulates image upon image, reason upon reason, it is simply that he is more in earnest than other writers."

A few sentences have already been given from Bulwer's "Thoughts on the Genius and Writings of William Hazlitt," contributed to the *Literary Remains*, which appeared six years after his death. The following sentences are taken from the same article :—"He had a keen sense of the Beautiful and the Subtle; and what is more, he was deeply imbued with sympathies for the Humane. He ranks high among the social writers—his intuitive feeling was in favour of the multitude; yet had he nothing of the demagogue in literature; he did not pander to a single vulgar passion. . . . Posterity will do him justice. . . . A complete collection of his works is all the monument he demands. To the next age he will stand amongst the foremost of the *thinkers* of the present; and that late and tardy retribution will assuredly be his, which compensates to others the neglect to which men of genius sometimes (though not so frequently as we believe) are doomed;—that retribution which, long after the envy they provoked is dumb, and the errors they themselves committed

are forgotten—invests with interest everything that is associated with their names;—making it an honour even to have been their contemporaries."

Thirty years later the same critic again spoke of Hazlitt in the following terms:—"Amidst all his intolerant prejudices and his wild extravagance of apparent hate, there are in Hazlitt from time to time—those times not unfrequent—outbursts of sentiment scarcely surpassed among the writers of our century for tender sweetness, rapid perceptions of truth and beauty in regions of criticism then but sparingly cultured—nay, scarcely discovered—and massive fragments of such composition as no hand of ordinary strength could hew out of the unransacked mines of our native language. . . It is not as a guide that Hazlitt can be useful to any man. His merit is that of a companion in districts little trodden—a companion strong and hardy, who keeps our sinews in healthful strain; rough and irascible; whose temper will constantly offend us if we do not steadily preserve our own; but always animated, vivacious, brilliant in his talk; suggestive of truths even when insisting on paradoxes; and of whom, when we part company, we retain impressions stamped with the crown-mark of indisputable genius." (*Quarterly Review*, January 1867, "Charles Lamb and Some of his Companions.")

"Hazlitt," says Thackeray (in a review of Horne's "New Spirit of the Age" in the *Morning Chronicle*, 1845), "was one of the keenest and brightest critics that ever lived. With partialities and prejudices innumerable, he had a wit so keen, a sensibility so exquisite, an appreciation of humour or pathos, or even of the greatest art, so lively, quick, and cultivated, that it was always good to know what were the impressions made by books, or men, or pictures on such a mind; and that, as there were not probably a dozen men in England with powers so varied, all the rest of the world might be rejoiced to listen to the opinions of this accomplished critic. He was of so different a caste to the people who gave authority in his day—the pompous big-wigs and schoolmen, who never could pardon him his familiarity of manner, so unlike their own—his popular—too popular—habits and sympathies, so much beneath their dignity. . . . In all his modes of life and thought he was so different from the established authorities, with their degrees and white neckcloths, that they hooted the man down with all the power of their lungs, and disdained to hear truth that came from such a rugged philosopher."

In her "History of England during the Thirty Years' Peace,"

Harriet Martineau thus writes of Hazlitt:—"In Hazlitt we lost the prince of critics; and after he was gone, there were many who could never look at a picture, or see a tragedy, or ponder a point of morals, or take a survey of any public character, without a melancholy sense of loss in Hazlitt's absence and silence. There can scarcely be a stronger gratification of the critical faculties than in reading Hazlitt's essays. He was not an amiable and happy, but he was a strong and courageous-minded man. His constitutional irritability was too restless to be soothed by the influences of literature and art, and his friends suffered from his temper almost as much as himself. Yet he was regarded with respect for his ingenuous courage in saying what was true about many important things and persons of his time, of whom it was fitting that the truth should be told. Hazlitt would have passed his life as an artist, but that he could not satisfy his own critical taste, and had no patience with any position but the first in any department in which he worked. The greater part of his life, therefore, was spent in a province of literature in which he was supreme in his own day, if not alone. As an essayist, he had rivals; as a critical essayist, he had none."

Dr. Richard Garnett, in a carefully written and discriminative article on William Hazlitt in the new edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, thus speaks of this writer: "Hazlitt's criticisms on Shakespeare, the Early Dramatists, the English Poets, Comic Writers, the Novelists and Essayists, are masterpieces of ingenious and felicitous exposition. . . . As an essayist, he is even more effective than as a critic, for his style of composition allows more scope to the striking individuality of his character. Being enabled to select his own subjects, he escapes dependence upon others either for his manner or his illustrations, and presents himself by turns as a metaphysician, a moralist, a humourist, a painter of manners and characteristics, but always, whatever his ostensible theme, deriving the essence of his commentary from his own bosom. This combination of intense subjectivity with strict adherence to his subject is one of Hazlitt's most distinctive and creditable traits. Intellectual truthfulness is a passion with him. He steeps his topic in the hues of his own individuality, but never uses it as a means of self-display. . . . With many serious defects both on the intellectual and the moral side, Hazlitt's character in both had at least the merit of sincerity and consistency. He was a compound of intellect and passion, and the refinement of his critical analysis is associated with vehement eloquence and glowing imagery. He was essentially a critic, a

dissector, and, as Bulwer justly remarks, a much better judge of men of thought than of men of action. But he also possessed many gifts in no way essential to the critical character, and transcending the critic's ordinary sphere. These, while giving him rank as an independent writer, frequently perturbed the natural clearness of his critical judgment, and seduced him into the paradoxes with which his works abound. These paradoxes, however, never spring from affectation; they are in general the sallies of a mind so agile and ardent as to overrun its own goal. His style is perfectly natural, and yet admirably calculated for effect. His diction, always rich and masculine, seems to kindle as he proceeds; and when thoroughly animated by his subject, he advances with a succession of energetic hard-hitting sentences, each carrying his argument a step farther, like a champion dealing out blows as he presses upon the enemy."

The most recent opinion delivered on Hazlitt is from the pen of Mr. George Saintsbury, and it is one with which every discriminating admirer of the essayist will in the main agree. It is characterised by that critical acumen and sound judgment which distinguish most of Mr. Saintsbury's literary estimates. It will be found in *Macmillan's Magazine* for 1887. It is only possible to give some sentences from the paper, which deserves a careful perusal by those who would wish to understand Hazlitt.

"There is indeed no doubt that Hazlitt is one of the most absolutely unequal writers in English, if not in any literature, Wilson being perhaps his only compeer. . . . It could not indeed be otherwise, because the inequality itself is due less to an intellectual than to a moral defect. The clear sunshine of Hazlitt's admirably acute intellect is always there; but it is constantly obscured by driving clouds of furious prejudice. . . . He was, in literature, a great man. I am myself disposed to think that, for all his access of hopelessly uncritical prejudice, he was the greatest critic that England has yet produced; and there are some who think (though I do not agree with them) that he was even greater as a miscellaneous essayist than as a critic. It is certainly upon his essays, critical and other, that his fame must rest. . . . These various drawbacks only set off the merits which almost every lover of literature must perceive in him. In most writers—in all save the very greatest—we look for one or two or for a few special faculties and capacities, and we know perfectly well that other (generally many other) capacities and faculties will not be found in them at all. . . . But in Hazlitt you

may find something of almost everything, except the finer bursts of wit and humour; to which last, however, he makes a certain side-approach by dint of his appreciation of the irony of nature and fate. Almost every other grace in matter and form that can be found in prose may be found at times in his. . . . Most of the fine writing of these latter days is but as crumpled tarlatan to brocaded satin beside the passage on Coleridge in the *English Poets*, or the description of Winterslow and its neighbourhood in the 'Farewell to Essay-Writing,' or 'On a Landscape of Nicholas Poussin' in the *Table-Talk*. Read these pieces and nothing else, and an excusable impression might be given that the writer was nothing if not florid. But turn over a dozen pages, and the most admirable examples of the grave and chaste manner occur. He is an inveterate quoter, yet few men are more original. No man is his superior in lively, gossipy description, yet he could, within his limits, reason closely and expound admirably. . . . Hazlitt's enthusiastic appreciation of what is good in letters, his combination of gusto with sound theory as to what is excellent in prose and verse, his felicitous method of expression, and the acuteness that kept him from that excessive and paradoxical admiration which both Lamb and Coleridge affected, and which has gained many more pupils than his own moderation, are always present. Nothing better has ever been written than his general view of the subject as an introduction to the Lectures on Elizabethan Literature. Of the famous four treatments of the dramatists of the Restoration—Lamb's, Hazlitt's, Leigh Hunt's, and Macaulay's—his seems to me by far the best. . . . No one has written better on Pope. . . . His chapter on the English novelists (that is to say, those of the last century) is perhaps the best thing ever written on the subject. . . . The 'Character of Cobbett' is the best thing the writer ever did of the kind, and the best thing that has ever been written about Cobbett. . . . 'My First Acquaintance with Poets' is a masterpiece. . . . A hap-hazard catalogue of the titles of essays may not be very succulent. But within moderate space there is really no other means of indicating the author's extraordinary range of subject, and at the same time the pervading excellence of his treatment. . . . In criticism of English literature, he is for the critic a subject never to be wearied of, always to be profited by. His very aberrations are often more instructive than other men's right-goings; and if he sometimes fails to detect or acknowledge a beauty, he never praises a defect. . . . The fact is that he was a born man of letters, and that he could not help turning everything

he touched into literature. . . . He was not, as it seems to me, quite at home in very short papers—in papers of the length of the average newspaper article. What he could do, as hardly any other man has ever done in England, was a *causerie* of about the same length as Sainte-Beuve's, or a little shorter, less limited in range, but also less artificially proportioned, than the great Frenchman's literary and historical studies, giving scope for considerable digression, but coming to an end before the author was wearied of his subject, or had exhausted the fresh thoughts and the happy borrowings and analogies which he had ready for it. . . . Hazlitt must have been one of the most uncomfortable of all English men of letters, who can be called great, to know as a friend. He is certainly, to those who know him only as readers, one of the most fruitful both in instruction and delight."

NOTE ON THE PORTRAIT.

The history of the portrait prefixed to this volume is as follows:—In 1824 Hazlitt visited Glasgow, and, while lecturing there, was introduced to a club devoted to the study of Shakespeare. A young artist, named Bewick (not belonging to the Newcastle Bewicks), also a member of this club, made a sketch of Hazlitt, an engraving from which, thirteen years later, was prefixed to the *Literary Remains*, edited by his son. Another member of the club, also an artist, made a copy of the original sketch. Not altogether satisfied with tho expression of the features, he endeavoured to improve it by adding a few touches of his own, which made the likeness a decidedly more successful rendering of the living man. About ten or twelve years ago I heard of this improved sketch through a friend who knew the artist, then an old man (since dead). He allowed a photographic copy of it to be taken for me, and it is from this copy that the present portrait has been engraved. If the two portraits are compared—viz., the one facing the title-page, with the one prefixed to the *Literary Remains*—the former impresses one with a much higher sense of the intellectual power and expression indicated in Hazlitt's features, than the latter. My friend, Mrs. Mary Cowden Clarke (still living), who knew Hazlitt during the last few years of his life, assures me that the likeness is an excellent one, as she well remembers his features and general expression.

SELECTIONS

FROM THE

WRITINGS OF WILLIAM HAZLITT.

[*The Eloquence of the British Senate; or, Select Specimens from the Speeches of the Most Distinguished Parliamentary Speakers, from the beginning of the Reign of Charles the First to the Present Time, with Notes, Biographical, Critical, and Explanatory. In 2 vols.*, 1807.]

THE CHARACTER OF BURKE.

[Originally appeared in *The Eloquence of the British Senate*, reprinted in *Political Essays, with Sketches of Public Characters*, 1819, with the following note: "This character was written in a fit of extravagant candour at a time when I thought I could do justice, or more than justice, to an enemy, without betraying a cause." It is included, along with the characters of Fox, Pitt, and Lord Chatham, in one of the volumes of Bell & Sons' edition of Hazlitt's principal works, 1872.]

THERE is no single speech of Mr. Burke which can convey a satisfactory idea of his powers of mind: to do him justice, it would be necessary to quote all his works; the only specimen of Burke is, *all that he wrote*. With respect to most other speakers, a specimen is generally enough, or more than enough. When you are acquainted with their manner, and see what proficiency they have made in the mechanical exercise of their profession, with what facility they can borrow a simile, or round a period, how dexterously they can argue, and object, and rejoin, you are satisfied; there is no other difference in their speeches than what arises from the difference of the subjects. But this was not the case with Burke. He brought his

subjects along with him; he drew his materials from himself. The only limits which circumscribed his variety were the stores of his own mind. His stock of ideas did not consist of a few meagre facts, meagrely stated, of half a dozen commonplaces tortured into a thousand different ways; but his mine of wealth was a profound understanding, inexhaustible as the human heart, and various as the sources of human nature. He therefore enriched every subject to which he applied himself, and new subjects were only the occasions of calling forth fresh powers of mind which had not been before exerted. It would therefore be in vain to look for the proof of his powers in any one of his speeches or writings: they all contain some additional proof of power. In speaking of Burke, then, I shall speak of the whole compass and circuit of his mind—not of that small part or section of him which I have been able to give; to do otherwise would be like the story of the man who put the brick in his pocket, thinking to show it as the model of a house. I have been able to manage pretty well with respect to all my other speakers, and curtailed them down without remorse. It was easy to reduce them within certain limits, to fix their spirit, and condense their variety; by having a certain quantity given, you might infer all the rest; it was only the same thing over again. But who can bind Proteus, or confine the roving flight of genius?

Burke's writings are better than his speeches, and indeed his speeches are writings. But he seemed to feel himself more at ease, to have a fuller possession of his faculties in addressing the public, than in addressing the House of Commons. Burke was *raised* into public life; and he seems to have been prouder of this new dignity than became so great a man. For this reason, most of his speeches have a sort of parliamentary preamble to them: he seems fond of coquetting with the House of Commons, and is perpetually calling the Speaker out to dance a minuet with him before he begins. There is also something like an attempt to stimulate the superficial dulness of his hearers by exciting their surprise, by running into extravagance: and he sometimes demeans himself by condescending to what may be considered as bordering too much upon buffoonery, for the amusement of the company. Those lines of Milton were admirably applied to him by some one—"The elephant to make them sport wreathed his proboscis lithe." The truth is, that he was out of his place in the House of Commons; he was eminently qualified to shine as a man of genius, as the instructor of mankind, as the brightest luminary of his age; but he had nothing in common with that motley crew of knights, citizens, and burgesses. He could not be said to be "native and endued unto that element." He was

above it; and never appeared like himself, but when, forgetful of the idle clamours of party, and of the little views of little men, he applied to his country and the enlightened judgment of mankind.

I am not going to make an idle panegyric on Burke (he has no need of it); but I cannot help looking upon him as the chief boast and ornament of the English House of Commons. What has been said of him is, I think, strictly true, that "he was the most eloquent man of his time: his wisdom was greater than his eloquence." The only public man that in my opinion can be put in any competition with him, is Lord Chatham; and he moved in a sphere so very remote, that it is almost impossible to compare them. But though it would perhaps be difficult to determine which of them excelled most in his particular way, there is nothing in the world more easy than to point out in what their peculiar excellences consisted. They were in every respect the reverse of each other. Chatham's eloquence was popular: his wisdom was altogether plain and practical. Burke's eloquence was that of the poet; of the man of high and unbounded fancy: his wisdom was profound and contemplative. Chatham's eloquence was calculated to make men *act:* Burke's was calculated to make them *think.* Chatham could have roused the fury of a multitude, and wielded their physical energy as he pleased: Burke's eloquence carried conviction into the mind of the retired and lonely student, opened the recesses of the human breast, and lighted up the face of nature around him. Chatham supplied his hearers with motives to immediate action: Burke furnished them with *reasons* for action which might have little effect upon them at the time, but for which they would be the wiser and better all their lives after. In research, in originality, in variety of knowledge, in richness of invention, in depth and comprehension of mind, Burke had as much the advantage of Lord Chatham as he was excelled by him in plain common sense, in strong feeling, in steadiness of purpose, in vehemence, in warmth, in enthusiasm, and energy of mind. Burke was the man of genius, of fine sense, and subtle reasoning; Chatham was a man of clear understanding, of strong sense, and violent passions. Burke's mind was satisfied with speculation: Chatham's was essentially *active;* it could not rest without an object. The power which governed Burke's mind was his Imagination; that which gave its *impetus* to Chatham was Will. The one was almost the creature of pure intellect, the other of physical temperament.

There are two very different ends which a man of genius may propose to himself, either in writing or speaking, and which will accordingly give birth to very different styles. He can have but one of these two objects; either to enrich or strengthen the mind; either to

furnish us with new ideas, to lead the mind into new trains of thought, to which it was before unused, and which it was incapable of striking out for itself; or else to collect and embody what we already knew, to rivet our old impressions more deeply; to make what was before plain still plainer, and to give to that which was familiar all the effect of novelty. In the one case we receive an accession to the stock of our ideas; in the other, an additional degree of life and energy is infused into them: our thoughts continue to flow in the same channels, but their pulse is quickened and invigorated. I do not know how to distinguish these different styles better than by calling them severally the inventive and refined, or the impressive and vigorous styles. It is only the subject-matter of eloquence, however, which is allowed to be remote or obscure. The things themselves may be subtle and recondite, but they must be dragged out of their obscurity and brought struggling to the light; they must be rendered plain and palpable (as far as it is in the wit of man to do so), or they are no longer eloquence. That which by its natural impenetrability, and in spite of every effort, remains dark and difficult, which is impervious to every ray, on which the imagination can shed no lustre, which can be clothed with no beauty, is not a subject for the orator or poet. At the same time it cannot be expected that abstract truths or profound observations should ever be placed in the same strong and dazzling points of view as natural objects and mere matters of fact. It is enough if they receive a reflex and borrowed lustre, like that which cheers the first dawn of morning, where the effect of surprise and novelty gilds every object, and the joy of beholding another world gradually emerging out of the gloom of night, "a new creation rescued from his reign," fills the mind with a sober rapture. Philosophical eloquence is in writing what *chiaro-scuro* is in painting; he would be a fool who should object that the colours in the shaded part of a picture were not so bright as those on the opposite side; the eye of the connoisseur receives an equal delight from both, balancing the want of brilliancy and effect with the greater delicacy of the tints, and difficulty of the execution. In judging of Burke, therefore, we are to consider, first, the style of eloquence which he adopted, and, secondly, the effects which he produced with it. If he did not produce the same effects on vulgar minds as some others have done, it was not for want of power, but from the turn and direction of his mind. It was because his subjects, his ideas, his arguments, were less vulgar. The question is not whether he brought certain truths equally home to us, but how much nearer he brought them than they were before. In my opinion, he united the two extremes of

refinement and strength in a higher degree than any other writer whatever.

The subtlety of his mind was undoubtedly that which rendered Burke a less popular writer and speaker than he otherwise would have been. It weakened the impression of his observations upon others, but I cannot admit that it weakened the observations themselves; that it took anything from their real weight or solidity. Coarse minds think all that is subtle, futile: that because it is not gross and obvious and palpable to the senses, it is therefore light and frivolous, and of no importance in the real affairs of life; thus making their own confined understandings the measure of truth, and supposing that whatever they do not distinctly perceive, is nothing. Seneca, who was not one of the vulgar, also says, that subtle truths are those which have the least substance in them, and consequently approach nearest to nonentity. But for my own part I cannot help thinking that the most important truths must be the most refined and subtle; for that very reason, that they must comprehend a great number of particulars, and instead of referring to any distinct or positive fact, must point out the combined effects of an extensive chain of causes, operating gradually, remotely, and collectively, and therefore imperceptibly. General principles are not the less true or important because from their nature they elude immediate observation; they are like the air, which is not the less necessary because we neither see nor feel it, or like that secret influence which binds the world together, and holds the planets in their orbits. The very same persons who are the most forward to laugh at all systematic reasoning as idle and impertinent, you will the next moment hear exclaiming bitterly against the baleful effects of new-fangled systems of philosophy, or gravely descanting on the immense importance of instilling sound principles of morality into the mind. It would not be a bold conjecture, but an obvious truism, to say, that all the great changes which have been brought about in the mortal world, either for the better or worse, have been introduced, not by the bare statement of facts, which are things already known, and which must always operate nearly in the same manner, but by the development of certain opinions and abstract principles of reasoning on life and manners, on the origin of society and man's nature in general, which being obscure and uncertain, vary from time to time, and produce corresponding changes in the human mind. They are the wholesome dew and rain, or the mildew and pestilence that silently destroy. To this principle of generalisation all wise law-givers, and the systems of philosophers, owe their influence.

It has always been with me a test of the sense and candour of any one belonging to the opposite party, whether he allowed Burke to be a great man. Of all the persons of this description that I have ever known, I never met with above one or two who would make this concession; whether it was that party feelings ran too high to admit of any real candour, or whether it was owing to an essential vulgarity in their habits of thinking, they all seemed to be of opinion that he was a wild enthusiast, or a hollow sophist, who was to be answered by bits of facts, by smart logic, by shrewd questions, and idle songs. They looked upon him as a man of disordered intellects, because he reasoned in a style to which they had not been used, and which confounded their dim perceptions. If you said that though you differed with him in sentiment, yet you thought him an admirable reasoner, and a close observer of human nature, you were answered with a loud laugh, and some hackneyed quotation. "Alas! Leviathan was not so tamed!" They did not know whom they had to contend with. The corner-stone, which the builders rejected, became the head-corner, though to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; for, indeed, I cannot discover that he was much better understood by those of his own party, if we may judge from the little affinity there is between his mode of reasoning and theirs. The simple clue to all his reasonings on politics is, I think, as follows. He did not agree with some writers that that mode of government is necessarily the best which is the cheapest. He saw in the construction of society other principles at work, and other capacities of fulfilling the desires, and perfecting the nature of man, besides those of securing the equal enjoyment of the means of animal life, and doing this at as little expense as possible. He thought that the wants and happiness of men were not to be provided for, as we provide for those of a herd of cattle, merely by attending to their physical necessities. He thought more nobly of his fellows. He knew that man had affections and passions and powers of imagination, as well as hunger and thirst, and the sense of heat and cold. He took his idea of political society from the pattern of private life, wishing, as he himself expresses it, to incorporate the domestic charities with the orders of the state, and to blend them together. He strove to establish an analogy between the compact that binds together the community at large, and that which binds together the several families that compose it. He knew that the rules that form the basis of private morality are not founded in reason, that is, in the abstract properties of those things which are the subjects of them, but in the nature of man, and his capacity of being affected by certain things

from habit, from imagination, and sentiment, as well as from reason.

Thus, the reason why a man ought to be attached to his wife and children is not, surely, that they are better than others (for in this case every one else ought to be of the same opinion), but because he must be chiefly interested in those things which are nearest to him, and with which he is best acquainted, since his understanding cannot reach equally to everything; because he must be most attached to those objects which he has known the longest, and which by their situation have actually affected him the most, not those which in themselves are the most affecting whether they have ever made any impression on him or no; that is, because he is by his nature the creature of habit and feeling, and because it is reasonable that he should act in conformity to his nature. Burke was so far right in saying that it is no objection to an institution that it is founded in *prejudice*, but the contrary, if that prejudice is natural and right; that is, if it arises from those circumstances which are properly subjects of feeling and association, not from any defect or perversion of the understanding in those things which fall strictly under its jurisdiction. On this profound maxim he took his stand. Thus he contended, that the prejudice in favour of nobility was natural and proper, and fit to be encouraged by the positive institutions of society: not on account of the real or personal merit of the individuals, but because such an institution has a tendency to enlarge and raise the mind, to keep alive the memory of past greatness, to connect the different ages of the world together, to carry back the imagination over a long tract of time, and feed it with the contemplation of remote events: because it is natural to think highly of that which inspires us with high thoughts, which has been connected for many generations with splendour, and affluence, and dignity, and power, and privilege. He also conceived, that by transferring the respect from the person to the thing, and thus rendering it steady and permanent, the mind would be habitually formed to sentiments of deference, attachment, and fealty, to whatever else demanded its respect: that it would be led to fix its view on what was elevated and lofty, and be weaned from that low and narrow jealousy which never willingly or heartily admits of any superiority in others, and is glad of every opportunity to bring down all excellence to a level with its own miserable standard. Nobility did not, therefore, exist to the prejudice of the other orders of the state, but by, and for them. The inequality of the different orders of society did not destroy the unity and harmony of the whole. The health and well-being of the moral world was to be promoted

by the same means as the beauty of the natural world; by contrast, by change, by light and shade, by variety of parts, by order and proportion. To think of reducing all mankind to the same insipid level, seemed to him the same absurdity as to destroy the inequalities of surface in a country, for the benefit of agriculture and commerce. In short, he believed that the interests of men in society should be consulted, and their several stations and employments assigned, with a view to their nature, not as physical, but as moral beings, so as to nourish their hopes, to lift their imagination, to enliven their fancy, to rouse their activity, to strengthen their virtue, and to furnish the greatest number of objects of pursuit, and means of enjoyment to beings constituted as man is, consistently with the order and stability of the whole.

The same reasoning might be extended farther. I do not say that his arguments are conclusive; but they are profound and *true*, as far as they go. There may be disadvantages and abuses necessarily interwoven with his scheme, or opposite advantages of infinitely greater value, to be derived from another order of things and state of society. This, however, does not invalidate either the truth or importance of Burke's reasoning; since the advantages he points out as connected with the mixed form of government are really and necessarily inherent in it: since they are compatible, in the same degree, with no other; since the principle itself on which he rests his argument (whatever we may think of the application) is of the utmost weight and moment; and since, on whichever side the truth lies, it is impossible to make a fair decision without having the opposite side of the question clearly and fully stated to us. This Burke has done in a masterly manner. He presents to you one view or face of society. Let him who thinks he can, give the reverse side with equal force, beauty, and clearness. It is said, I know, that truth is *one;* but to this I cannot subscribe, for it appears to me that truth is *many*. There are as many truths as there are things and causes of action and contradictory principles at work in society. In making up the account of good and evil, indeed, the final result must be one way or the other; but the particulars on which that result depends are infinite and various.

It will be seen from what I have said, that I am very far from agreeing with those who think that Burke was a man without understanding, and a merely florid writer. There are two causes which have given rise to this calumny; namely, that narrowness of mind which leads men to suppose that the truth lies entirely on the side of their own opinions, and that whatever does not make

for them is absurd and irrational; secondly, a trick we have of confounding reason with judgment, and supposing that it is merely the province of the understanding to pronounce sentence, and not to give evidence, or argue the case; in short, that it is a passive, not an active faculty. Thus there are persons who never run into any extravagance, because they are so buttressed up with the opinions of others on all sides, that they cannot lean much to one side or the other; they are so little moved with any kind of reasoning, that they remain at an equal distance from every extreme, and are never very far from the truth, because the slowness of their faculties will not suffer them to make much progress in error. These are persons of great judgment. The scales of the mind are pretty sure to remain even, when there is nothing in them. In this sense of the word, Burke must be allowed to have wanted judgment, by all those who think that he was wrong in his conclusions. The accusation of want of judgment, in fact, only means that you yourself are of a different opinion. But if in arriving at one error he discovered a hundred truths, I should consider myself a hundred times more indebted to him than if, stumbling on that which I consider as the right side of the question, he had committed a hundred absurdities in striving to establish his point. I speak of him now merely as an author, or as far as I and other readers are concerned with him; at the same time, I should not differ from any one who may be disposed to contend that the consequences of his writings as instruments of political power have been tremendous, fatal, such as no exertion of wit or knowledge or genius can ever counteract or atone for.

Burke also gave a hold to his antagonists by mixing up sentiment and imagery with his reasoning; so that, being unused to such a sight in the region of politics, they were deceived, and could not discern the fruit from the flowers. Gravity is the cloak of wisdom; and those who have nothing else think it an insult to affect the one without the other, because it destroys the only foundation on which their pretensions are built. The easiest part of reason is dulness; the generality of the world are therefore concerned in discouraging any example of unnecessary brilliancy that might tend to show that the two things do not always go together. Burke in some measure dissolved the spell. It was discovered, that his gold was not the less valuable for being wrought into elegant shapes, and richly embossed with curious figures; that the solidity of a building is not destroyed by adding to it beauty and ornament; and that the strength of a man's understanding is not always to be estimated in exact proportion to his want of imagination. His understand-

ing was not the less real, because it was not the only faculty he possessed. He justified the description of the poet—

> "How charming is divine philosophy!
> Not harsh and crabbed as dull fools suppose,
> But musical as is Apollo's lute!"

Those who object to this union of grace and beauty with reason, are in fact weak-sighted people, who cannot distinguish the noble and majestic form of Truth from that of her sister Folly, if they are dressed both alike! But there is always a difference even in the adventitious ornaments they wear, which is sufficient to distinguish them.

Burke was so far from being a gaudy or flowery writer, that he was one of the severest writers we have. His words are the most like things; his style is the most strictly suited to the subject. He unites every extreme and every variety of composition; the lowest and the meanest words and descriptions with the highest. He exults in the display of power, in showing the extent, the force, and intensity of his ideas; he is led on by the mere impulse and vehemence of his fancy, not by the affectation of dazzling his readers by gaudy conceits or pompous images. He was completely carried away by his subject. He had no other object but to produce the strongest impression on his reader, by giving the truest, the most characteristic, the fullest, and most forcible description of things, trusting to the power of his own mind to mould them into grace and beauty. He did not produce a splendid effect by setting fire to the light vapours that float in the regions of fancy, as the chemists make fine colours with phosphorus, but by the eagerness of his blows struck fire from the flint, and melted the hardest substances in the furnace of his imagination. The wheels of his imagination did not catch fire from the rottenness of the materials, but from the rapidity of their motion. One would suppose, to hear people talk of Burke, that his style was such as would have suited the *Lady's Magazine;* soft, smooth, showy, tender, insipid, full of fine words, without any meaning. The essence of the gaudy or glittering style consists in producing a momentary effect by fine words and images brought together, without order or connection. Burke most frequently produced an effect by the remoteness and novelty of his combinations, by the force of contrast, by the striking manner in which the most opposite and unpromising materials were harmoniously blended together; not by laying his hands on all the fine things he could think of, but by bringing together those things which he knew would blaze out into glorious light by their

collision. The florid style is a mixture of affectation and commonplace. Burke's was an union of untameable vigour and originality.

Burke was not a verbose writer. If he sometimes multiplies words, it is not for want of ideas, but because there are no words that fully express his ideas, and he tries to do it as well as he can by different ones. He had nothing of the *set* or formal style, the measured cadence, and stately phraseology of Johnson, and most of our modern writers. This style, which is what we understand by the *artificial*, is all in one key. It selects a certain set of words to represent all ideas whatever, as the most dignified and elegant, and excludes all others as low and vulgar. The words are not fitted to the things, but the things to the words. Everything is seen through a false medium. It is putting a mask on the face of nature, which may indeed hide some specks and blemishes, but takes away all beauty, delicacy, and variety. It destroys all dignity or elevation, because nothing can be raised where all is on a level, and completely destroys all force, expression, truth, and character, by arbitrarily confounding the differences of things, and reducing everything to the same insipid standard. To suppose that this stiff uniformity can add anything to real grace or dignity, is like supposing that the human body, in order to be perfectly graceful, should never deviate from its upright posture. Another mischief of this method is, that it confounds all ranks in literature. Where there is no room for variety, no discrimination, no nicety to be shown in matching the idea with its proper word, there can be no room for taste or elegance. A man must easily learn the art of writing, when every sentence is to be cast in the same mould: where he is only allowed the use of one word he cannot choose wrong, nor will he be in much danger of making himself ridiculous by affectation or false glitter, when, whatever subject he treats of, he must treat of it in the same way. This indeed is to wear golden chains for the sake of ornament.

Burke was altogether free from the pedantry which I have here endeavoured to expose. His style was as original, as expressive, as rich and varied, as it was possible; his combinations were as exquisite, as playful, as happy, as unexpected, as bold and daring, as his fancy. If anything, he ran into the opposite extreme of too great an inequality, if truth and nature could ever be carried to an extreme.

Those who are best acquainted with the writings and speeches of Burke will not think the praise I have here bestowed on them exaggerated. Some proof will be found of this in the following extracts. But the full proof must be sought in his works at large,

and particularly in the *Thoughts on the Discontents;* in his *Reflections on the French Revolution;* in his *Letter to the Duke of Bedford;* and in the *Regicide Peace.* The two last of these are perhaps the most remarkable of all his writings, from the contrast they afford to each other. The one is the most delightful exhibition of wild and brilliant fancy that is to be found in English prose, but it is too much like a beautiful picture painted upon gauze; it wants something to support it: the other is without ornament, but it has all the solidity, the weight, the gravity of a judicial record. It seems to have been written with a certain constraint upon himself, and to show those who said he could not *reason,* that his arguments might be stripped of their ornaments without losing anything of their force. It is certainly, of all his works, that in which he has shown most power of logical deduction, and the only one in which he has made any important use of facts. In general he certainly paid little attention to them: they were the playthings of his mind. He saw them as he pleased, not as they were; with the eye of the philosopher or the poet, regarding them only in their general principle, or as they might serve to decorate his subject. This is the natural consequence of much imagination: things that are probable are elevated into the rank of realities. To those who can reason on the essences of things, or who can invent according to nature, the experimental proof is of little value. This was the case with Burke. In the present instance, however, he seems to have forced his mind into the service of facts; and he succeeded completely. His comparison between our connection with France or Algiers, and his account of the conduct of the war, are as clear, as convincing, as forcible examples of this kind of reasoning, as are anywhere to be met with. Indeed I do not think there is anything in Fox (whose mind was purely historical) or in Chatham (who attended to feelings more than facts), that will bear a comparison with them.

Burke has been compared to Cicero—I do not know for what reason. Their excellences are as different, and indeed as opposite, as they can well be. Burke had not the polished elegance, the glossy neatness, the artful regularity, the exquisite modulation of Cicero: he had a thousand times more richness and originality of mind, more strength and pomp of diction.

It has been well observed, that the ancients had no word that properly expresses what we mean by the word *genius.* They perhaps had not the thing. Their minds appear to have been too exact, too retentive, too minute and subtle, too sensible to the external differences of things, too passive under their impressions, to admit of those bold and rapid combinations, those lofty flights of fancy, which,

glancing from heaven to earth, unite the most opposite extremes, and draw the happiest illustrations from things the most remote. Their ideas were kept too confined and distinct by the material form or vehicle in which they were conveyed, to unite cordially together, or be melted down in the imagination. Their metaphors are taken from things of the same class, not from things of different classes; the general analogy, not the individual feeling, directs them in their choice. Hence, as Dr. Johnson observed, their similes are either repetitions of the same idea, or so obvious and general as not to lend any additional force to it; as when a huntress is compared to Diana, or a warrior rushing into battle to a lion rushing on his prey. Their *forte* was exquisite art and perfect imitation. Witness their statues and other things of the same kind. But they had not that high and enthusiastic fancy which some of our own writers have shown. For the proof of this, let any one compare Milton and Shakspeare with Homer and Sophocles, or Burke with Cicero.

It may be asked whether Burke was a poet. He was so only in the general vividness of his fancy, and in richness of invention. There may be poetical passages in his works, but I certainly think that his writings in general are quite distinct from poetry; and that for the reason before given, namely, that the subject-matter of them is not poetical. The finest part of them are illustrations or personifications of dry abstract ideas;[1] and the union between the idea and the illustration is not of that perfect and pleasing kind as to constitute poetry, or indeed to be admissible, but for the effect intended to be produced by it; that is, by every means in our power to give animation and attraction to subjects in themselves barren of ornament, but which at the same time are pregnant with the most important consequences, and in which the understanding and the passions are equally interested.

I have heard it remarked by a person, to whose opinion I would sooner submit than to a general council of critics, that the sound of Burke's prose is not musical; that it wants cadence; and that instead of being so lavish of his imagery as is generally supposed, he seemed to him to be rather parsimonious in the use of it, always expanding and making the most of his ideas. This may be true if we compare him with some of our poets, or perhaps with some of our early prose writers, but not if we compare him with any of our political writers or parliamentary speakers. There are some very fine things of Lord Bolingbroke's on the same subjects, but not

[1] As in the comparison of the British Constitution to the "proud keep of Windsor," &c., the most splendid passage in his works.

equal to Burke's. As for Junius, he is at the head of his class: but that class is not the highest. He has been said to have more dignity than Burke. Yes—if the stalk of a giant is less dignified than the strut of a *petit-maître*. I do not mean to speak disrespectfully of Junius, but grandeur is not the character of his composition; and if it is not to be found in Burke, it is to be found nowhere.

LATER REMARKS ON BURKE.

[The following, under the heading "Character of Mr. Burke," dated October 5, 1817, appeared in *Political Essays and Sketches of Public Characters*, 1819.]

It is not without reluctance that we speak of the vices and infirmities of such a mind as Burke's: but the poison of high example has by far the widest range of destruction: and, for the sake of public honour and individual integrity, we think it right to say, that however it may be defended upon other grounds, the political career of that eminent individual has no title to the praise of consistency. Mr. Burke, the opponent of the American war, and Mr. Burke, the opponent of the French Revolution, are not the same person, but opposite persons—not opposite persons only, but deadly enemies. In the latter period, he abandoned not only all his practical conclusions, but all the principles on which they were founded. He proscribed all his former sentiments, denounced all his former friends, rejected and reviled all the maxims to which he had formerly appealed as incontestable. In the American war, he constantly spoke of the rights of the people as inherent, and inalienable: after the French Revolution, he began by treating them with the chicanery of a sophist, and ended by raving at them with the fury of a maniac. In the former case, he held out the duty of resistance to oppression, as the palladium and only ultimate resource of natural liberty; in the latter, he scouted, prejudged, vilified and nicknamed, all resistance in the abstract, as a foul and unnatural union of rebellion and sacrilege. In the one case, to answer the purposes of faction, he made it out, that the people are always in the right; in the other, to answer different ends, he made it out that they are always in the wrong—lunatics in the hands of their royal keepers, patients in the sick-wards of an hospital, or felons in the condemned cells of a prison. In the one, he considered that there was a constant tendency on the part of the prerogative to encroach on the rights of the people, which ought always to be the object of the most watchful jealousy, and of resistance, when necessary: in the other, he pretended to

regard it as the sole occupation and ruling passion of those in power, to watch over the liberties and happiness of their subjects. The burthen of all his speeches on the American war, was conciliation, concession, timely reform, as the only practicable or desirable alternative of rebellion: the object of all his writings on the French Revolution was, to deprecate and explode all concession and all reform, as encouraging rebellion, and as an irretrievable step to revolution and anarchy. In the one, he insulted kings personally, as among the lowest and worst of mankind; in the other, he held them up to the imagination of his readers, as sacred abstractions. In the one case, he was a partisan of the people, to court popularity; in the other, to gain the favour of the Court, he became the apologist of all courtly abuses. In the one case, he took part with those who were actually rebels against his Sovereign: in the other, he denounced as rebels and traitors, all those of his own countrymen who did not yield sympathetic allegiance to a foreign Sovereign, whom we had always been in the habit of treating as an arbitrary tyrant.

Nobody will accuse the principles of his present Majesty, or the general measures of his reign, of inconsistency. If they had no other merit, they have, at least, that of having been all along actuated by one uniform and constant spirit: yet Mr. Burke at one time vehemently opposed, and afterwards most intemperately extolled them: and it was for his recanting his opposition, not for his persevering in it, that he received his pension. He does not himself mention his flaming speeches on the American war, as among the public services which had entitled him to this remuneration.

The truth is, that Burke was a man of fine fancy and subtle reflection; but not of sound and practical judgment, nor of high or rigid principles.—As to his understanding, he certainly was not a great philosopher; for his works of mere abstract reasoning are shallow and inefficient:—nor was he a man of sense and business; for, both in counsel and in conduct, he alarmed his friends as much at least as his opponents:—but he was an acute and accomplished man of letters—an ingenious political essayist. He applied the habit of reflection, which he had borrowed from his metaphysical studies, but which was not competent to the discovery of any elementary truth in that department, with great facility and success, to the mixed mass of human affairs. He knew more of the political machine than a recluse philosopher; and he speculated more profoundly on its principles and general results than a mere politician. He saw a number of fine distinctions and changeable aspects of things, the good mixed with the ill, and the ill mixed with the good; and with a sceptical indifference, in which the exercise of his own ingenuity

was obviously the governing principle, suggested various topics to qualify or assist the judgment of others. But for this very reason, he was little calculated to become a leader or a partisan in any important practical measure. For the habit of his mind would lead him to find out a reason for or against anything: and it is not on speculative refinements (which belong to *every* side of a question), but on a just estimate of the aggregate mass and extended combinations of objections and advantages, that we ought to decide or act. Burke had the power of throwing true or false weights into the scales of political casuistry, but not firmness of mind (or, shall we say, honesty enough) to hold the balance. When he took a side, his vanity or his spleen more frequently gave the casting vote than his judgment; and the fieriness of his zeal was in exact proportion to the levity of his understanding, and the want of conscious sincerity.

He was fitted by nature and habit for the studies and labours of the closet; and was generally mischievous when he came out; because the very subtlety of his reasoning, which, left to itself, would have counteracted its own activity, or found its level in the common sense of mankind, became a dangerous engine in the hands of power, which is always eager to make use of the most plausible pretexts to cover the most fatal designs. That which, if applied as a general observation on human affairs, is a valuable truth suggested to the mind, may, when forced into the interested defence of a particular measure or system, become the grossest and basest sophistry. Facts or consequences never stood in the way of this speculative politician. He fitted them to his preconceived theories, instead of conforming his theories to them. They were the playthings of his style, the sport of his fancy. They were the straws of which his imagination made a blaze, and were consumed, like straws, in the blaze they had served to kindle. The fine things he said about Liberty and Humanity, in his speech on the Begum's affairs, told equally well, whether Warren Hastings was a tyrant or not: nor did he care one jot who caused the famine he described, so that he described it in a way that no one else could. On the same principle, he represented the French priests and nobles under the old regime as excellent moral people, very charitable and very religious, in the teeth of notorious facts,—to answer to the handsome things he had to say in favour of priesthood and nobility in general; and, with similar views, he falsifies the records of our English Revolution, and puts an interpretation on the word *abdication*, of which a schoolboy would be ashamed. He constructed his whole theory of government, in short, not on rational, but on picturesque and fanciful principles; as if the king's crown were a painted gewgaw, to be looked at on

gala-days; titles an empty sound to please the ear; and the whole order of society a threatrical procession. His lamentations over the age of chivalry, and his projected crusade to restore it, are about as wise as if any one, from reading the Beggar's Opera, should take to picking of pockets: or, from admiring the landscapes of Salvator Rosa, should wish to convert the abodes of civilised life into the haunts of wild beasts and banditti. On this principle of false refinement, there is no abuse, nor system of abuses, that does not admit of an easy and triumphant defence; for there is something which a merely speculative inquirer may always find out, good as well as bad, in every possible system, the best or the worst; and if we can once get rid of the restraints of common sense and honesty, we may easily prove, by plausible words, that liberty and slavery, peace and war, plenty and famine, are matters of perfect indifference. This is the school of politics, of which Mr. Burke was at the head; and it is perhaps to his example, in this respect, that we owe the prevailing tone of many of those newspaper paragraphs, which Mr. Coleridge thinks so invaluable an accession to our political philosophy.

Burke's literary talents were, after all, his chief excellence. His style has all the familiarity of conversation, and all the research of the most elaborate composition. He says what he wants to say, by any means, nearer or more remote, within his reach. He makes use of the most common or scientific terms, of the longest or shortest sentences, of the plainest and most downright, or of the most figurative modes of speech. He gives for the most part loose reins to his imagination, and follows it as far as the language will carry him. As long as the one or the other has any resources in store to make the reader feel and see the thing as he has conceived it, in its nicest shades of difference, in its utmost degree of force and splendour, he never disdains, and never fails to employ them. Yet, in the extremes of his mixed style, there is not much affectation, and but little either of pedantry or of coarseness. He everywhere gives the image he wishes to give, in its true and appropriate colouring: and it is the very crowd and variety of these images that have given to his language its peculiar tone of animation, and even of passion. It is his impatience to transfer his conceptions entire, living, in all their rapidity, strength, and glancing variety, to the minds of others, that constantly pushes him to the verge of extravagance, and yet supports him there in dignified security—

> "Never so sure our rapture to create,
> As when he treads the brink of all we hate."

He is, with the exception of Jeremy Taylor, the most poetical of

our prose writers, and at the same time his prose never degenerates into the mere effeminacy of poetry; for he always aims at overpowering rather than at pleasing; and consequently sacrifices beauty and delicacy to force and vividness. He has invariably a task to perform, a positive purpose to execute, an effect to produce. His only object is therefore to strike hard, and in the right place; if he misses his mark, he repeats his blow; and does not care how ungraceful the action, or how clumsy the instrument, provided it brings down his antagonist.

THE CHARACTER OF FOX.

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I SHALL begin with observing generally, that Mr. Fox excelled all his contemporaries in the extent of his knowledge, in the clearness and distinctness of his views, in quickness of apprehension, in plain practical common sense, in the full, strong, and absolute possession of his subject. A measure was no sooner proposed than he seemed to have an instantaneous and intuitive perception of its various bearings and consequences; of the manner in which it would operate on the different classes of society, on commerce or agriculture, on our domestic or foreign policy; of the difficulties attending its execution; in a word, of all its practical results, and the comparative advantages to be gained either by adopting or rejecting it. He was intimately acquainted with the interests of the different parts of the community, with the minute and complicated details of political economy, with our external relations, with the views, the resources, and the maxims of other states. He was master of all those facts and circumstances which it was necessary to know in order to judge fairly and determine wisely; and he knew them not loosely or lightly, but in number, weight, and measure. He had also stored his memory by reading and general study, and improved his understanding by the lamp of history. He was well acquainted with the opinions and sentiments of the best authors, with the maxims of the most profound politicians, with the causes of the rise and fall of states, with the general passions of men, with the characters of different nations, and the laws and constitution of his own country.

He was a man of large, capacious, powerful, and highly cultivated intellect. No man could know more than he knew; no man's knowledge could be more sound, more plain and useful; no man's knowledge could lie in more connected and tangible masses; no man could be more perfectly master of his ideas, could reason upon them more closely, or decide upon them more impartially. His mind was full, even to overflowing. He was so habitually conversant with the most intricate and comprehensive trains of thought, or such was the natural vigour and exuberance of his mind, that he seemed to recall them without any effort. His ideas quarrelled for utterance. So far from ever being at a loss for them, he was obliged rather to repress and rein them in, lest they should overwhelm and confound, instead of informing the understandings of his hearers.

If to this we add the ardour and natural impetuosity of his mind, his quick sensibility, his eagerness in the defence of truth, and his impatience of everything that looked like trick or artifice or affectation, we shall be able in some measure to account for the character of his eloquence. His thoughts came crowding in too fast for the slow and mechanical process of speech. What he saw in an instant, he could only express imperfectly, word by word, and sentence after sentence. He would, if he could, "have bared his swelling heart," and laid open at once the rich treasures of knowledge with which his bosom was fraught. It is no wonder that this difference between the rapidity of his feelings, and the formal round-about method of communicating them, should produce some disorder in his frame; that the throng of his ideas should try to overleap the narrow boundaries which confined them, and tumultuously break down their prison-doors, instead of waiting to be let out one by one, and following patiently at due intervals and with mock dignity, like poor dependents, in the train of words; that he should express himself in hurried sentences, in involuntary exclamations, by vehement gestures, by sudden starts and bursts of passion. Everything showed the agitation of his mind. His tongue faltered, his voice became almost suffocated, and his face was bathed in tears. He was lost in the magnitude of his subject. He reeled and staggered under the load of feeling which oppressed him. He rolled like the sea beaten by a tempest. Whoever, having the feelings of a man, compared him at these times with his boasted rival—his stiff, straight, upright figure, his gradual contortions, turning round as if moved by a pivot, his solemn pauses, his deep tones, "whose sound reverbed their own hollowness," must have said, This is a man; that is an automaton. If Fox had needed grace, he would have had it; but it was not the character of his mind, nor would it have suited with the style of his

eloquence. It was Pitt's object to smooth over the abruptness and intricacies of his argument by the gracefulness of his manner, and to fix the attention of his hearers on the pomp and sound of his words. Lord Chatham, again, strove to *command* others; he did not try to convince them, but to overpower their understandings by the greater strength and vehemence of his own; to awe them by a sense of personal superiority: and he therefore was obliged to assume a lofty and dignified manner. It was to him they bowed, not to truth; and whatever related to *himself*, must therefore have a tendency to inspire respect and admiration. Indeed, he would never have attempted to gain that ascendant over men's minds that he did, if either his mind or body had been different from what they were; if his temper had not urged him to control and command others, or if his personal advantages had not enabled him to secure that kind of authority which he coveted. But it would have been ridiculous in Fox to have affected either the smooth plausibility, the stately gravity of the one, or the proud domineering, imposing dignity of the other; or even if he could have succeeded, it would only have injured the effect of his speeches. What he had to rely on was the strength, the solidity of his ideas, his complete and thorough knowledge of his subject. It was his business therefore to fix the attention of his hearers, not on himself, but on his subject; to rivet it there, to hurry it on from words to things:—the only circumstance of which they required to be convinced with respect to himself, was the sincerity of his opinions; and this would be best done by the earnestness of his manner, by giving a loose to his feelings, and by showing the most perfect forgetfulness of himself, and of what others thought of him. The moment a man shows you either by affected words or looks or gestures, that he is thinking of himself, and you, that he is trying either to please or terrify you into compliance, there is an end at once to that kind of eloquence which owes its effect to the force of truth, and to your confidence in the sincerity of the speaker. It was, however, to the confidence inspired by the earnestness and simplicity of his manner, that Mr. Fox was indebted for more than half the effect of his speeches. Some others might possess nearly as much information, as exact a knowledge of the situation and interests of the country; but they wanted that zeal, that animation, that enthusiasm, that deep sense of the importance of the subject, which removes all doubt or suspicion from the minds of the hearers, and communicates its own warmth to every breast. We may convince by argument alone; but it is by the interest we discover in the success of our reasonings, that we persuade others to feel and act with us. There are two circumstances which Fox's speeches and Lord

Chatham's had in common: they are alike distinguished by a kind of plain downright common sense, and by the vehemence of their manner. But still there is a great difference between them, in both these respects. Fox in his opinions was governed by facts—Chatham was more influenced by the feelings of others respecting those facts. Fox endeavoured to find out what the consequences of any measure would be; Chatham attended more to what people would think of it. Fox appealed to the practical reason of mankind; Chatham to popular prejudice. The one repelled the encroachments of power by supplying his hearers with arguments against it; the other by rousing their passions and arming their resentment against those who would rob them of their birthright. Their vehemence and impetuosity arose also from very different feelings. In Chatham it was pride, passion, self-will, impatience of control, a determination to have his own way, to carry everything before him; in Fox it was pure, good nature, a sincere love of truth, an ardent attachment to what he conceived to be right; an anxious concern for the welfare and liberties of mankind. Or if we suppose that ambition had taken a strong hold of both their minds, yet their ambition was of a very different kind: in the one it was the love of power, in the other it was the love of fame. Nothing can be more opposite than these two principles, both in their origin and tendency. The one originates in a selfish, haughty, domineering spirit; the other in a social and generous sensibility, desirous of the love and esteem of others, and anxiously bent upon gaining merited applause. The one grasps at immediate power by any means within its reach: the other, if it does not square its actions by the rules of virtue, at least refers them to a standard which comes the nearest to it—the disinterested applause of our country, and the enlightened judgment of posterity. The love of fame is consistent with the steadiest attachment to principle, and indeed strengthens and supports it; whereas the love of power, where this is the ruling passion, requires the sacrifice of principle, at every turn, and is inconsistent even with the shadow of it. I do not mean to say that Fox had no love of power, or Chatham no love of fame (this would be reversing all we know of human nature), but that the one principle predominated in the one, and the other in the other. My reader will do me great injustice if he supposes that in attempting to describe the characters of different speakers by contrasting their general qualities, I mean anything beyond the *more* or *less:* but it is necessary to describe those qualities simply and in the abstract, in order to make the distinction intelligible. Chatham resented any attack made upon the cause of liberty, of which he was the avowed champion, as an indignity offered to

himself. Fox felt it as a stain upon the honour of his country, and as an injury to the rights of his fellow-citizens. The one was swayed by his own passions and purposes, with very little regard to the consequences; the sensibility of the other was roused, and his passions kindled into a generous flame, by a real interest in whatever related to the welfare of mankind, and by an intense and earnest contemplation of the consequences of the measures he opposed. It was this union of the zeal of the patriot with the enlightened knowledge of the statesman, that gave to the eloquence of Fox a more than mortal energy; that warmed, expanded, penetrated every bosom. He relied on the force of truth and nature alone; the refinements of philosophy, the pomp and pageantry of the imagination were forgotten, or seemed light and frivolous; the fate of nations, the welfare of millions, hung suspended as he spoke; a torrent of manly eloquence poured from his heart, bore down everything in its course, and surprised into a momentary sense of human feeling the breathing corpses, the wire-moved puppets, the stuffed figures, the flexible machinery, the "deaf and dumb things" of a court.

I find (I do not know how the reader feels) that it is difficult to write a character of Fox without running into insipidity or extravagance. And the reason of this is, there are no splendid contrasts, no striking irregularities, no curious distinctions to work upon; no "jutting frieze, buttress, nor coigne of 'vantage," for the imagination to take hold of. It was a plain marble slab, inscribed in plain legible characters, without either hieroglyphics or carving. There was the same directness and manly simplicity in everything that he did. The whole of his character may indeed be summed up in two words —strength and simplicity. Fox was in the class of common men, but he was the first in that class. Though it is easy to describe the differences of things, nothing is more difficult than to describe their degrees or quantities. In what I am going to say, I hope I shall not be suspected of a design to underrate his powers of mind, when in fact I am only trying to ascertain their nature and direction. The degree and extent to which he possessed them can only be known by reading, or indeed by having heard his speeches.

His mind, as I have already said, was, I conceive, purely *historical;* and having said this, I have, I believe, said all. But perhaps it will be necessary to explain a little further what I mean. I mean, then, that his memory was in an extraordinary degree tenacious of facts; that they were crowded together in his mind without the least perplexity or confusion; that there was no chain of consequences too vast for his powers of comprehension; that the different parts and ramifications of his subject were never so involved and intricate but

that they were easily disentangled in the clear prism of his understanding. The basis of his wisdom was experience: he not only knew what had happened, but by an exact knowledge of the real state of things, he could always tell what in the common course of events would happen in future. The force of his mind was exerted on facts: as long as he could lean directly upon these, as long as he had the actual objects to refer to, to steady himself by, he could analyse, he could combine, he could compare and reason upon them, with the utmost exactness; but he could not reason *out of* them. He was what is understood by a *matter-of-fact* reasoner. He was better acquainted with the concrete masses of things, their substantial forms and practical connections, than with their abstract nature or general definitions. He was a man of extensive information, of sound knowledge, and clear understanding, rather than the acute observer or profound thinker. He was the man of business, the accomplished statesman, rather than the philosopher. His reasonings were, generally speaking, calculations of certain positive results, which, the *data* being given, must follow as matters of course, rather than unexpected and remote truths drawn from a deep insight into human nature, and the subtle application of general principles to particular cases. They consisted chiefly in the detail and combination of a vase number of items in an account, worked by the known rules of political arithmetic; not in the discovery of bold, comprehensive, and original theorems in the science. They were rather acts of memory, of continued attention, of a power of bringing all his ideas to bear at once upon a single point, than of reason or invention. He was the attentive observer who watches the various effects and successive movements of a machine already constructed, and can tell how to manage it while it goes on as it has always done; but who knows little or nothing of the principles on which it is constructed, nor how to set it right, if it becomes disordered, except by the most common and obvious expedients. Burke was to Fox what the geometrician is to the mechanic. Much has been said of the "prophetic mind" of Mr. Fox. The same epithet has been applied to Mr. Burke, till it has become proverbial. It has, I think, been applied without much reason to either. Fox wanted the scientific part. Burke wanted the practical. Fox had too little imagination, Burke had too much: that is, he was careless of facts, and was led away by his passions to look at one side of a question only. He had not that fine sensibility to outward impressions, that nice *tact* of circumstances, which is necessary to the consummate politician. Indeed, his wisdom was more that of the legislator than of the active statesman. They both tried their

strength in the Ulysses' bow of politicians, the French Revolution: and they were both foiled. Fox indeed foretold the success of the French in combating with foreign powers. But this was no more than what every friend of the liberty of France foresaw or foretold as well as he. All those on the same side of the question were inspired with the same sagacity on the subject. Burke, on the other hand, seems to have been beforehand with the public in foreboding the internal disorders that would attend the Revolution, and its ultimate failure; but then it is at least a question whether he did not make good his own predictions: and certainly he saw into the causes and connection of events much more clearly after they had happened than before. He was, however, undoubtedly a profound commentator on that apocalyptical chapter in the history of human nature, which I do not think Fox was. Whether led to it by the events or not, he saw thoroughly into the principles that operated to produce them; and he pointed them out to others in a manner which could not be mistaken. I can conceive of Burke, as the genius of the storm, perched over Paris, the centre and focus of anarchy (so he would have us believe), hovering "with mighty wings outspread over the abyss, and rendering it pregnant," watching the passions of men gradually unfolding themselves in new situations, penetrating those hidden motives which hurried them from one extreme into another, arranging and analysing the principles that alternately pervaded the vast chaotic mass, and extracting the elements of order and the cement of social life from the decomposition of all society; while Charles Fox in the meantime dogged the heels of the allies (all the while calling out to them to stop) with his sutler's bag, his muster-roll, and army estimates at his back. He said, You have only fifty thousand troops, the enemy have a hundred thousand: this place is dismantled, it can make no resistance: your troops were beaten last year, they must therefore be disheartened this. This is excellent sense and sound reasoning, but I do not see what it has to do with philosophy. But why was it necessary that Fox should be a philosopher? Why, in the first place, Burke was a philosopher, and Fox, to keep up with him, must be so too. In the second place, it was necessary in order that his indiscreet admirers, who have no idea of greatness but as it consists in certain names and pompous titles, might be able to talk big about their patron. It is a bad compliment we pay to our idol when we endeavour to make him out something different from himself; it shows that we are not satisfied with what he is. I have heard it said that he had as much imagination as Burke. To this extravagant assertion I shall make what I conceive to be a very cautious and moderate answer: that Burke was as superior to Fox

in this respect as Fox perhaps was to the first person you would meet in the street. There is, in fact, hardly an instance of imagination to be met with in any of his speeches; what there is, is of the rhetorical kind. I may, however, be wrong. He might excel as much in profound thought, and richness of fancy, as he did in other things; though I cannot perceive it. However, when any one publishes a book called The Beauties of Fox, containing the original reflections, brilliant passages, lofty metaphors, &c., to be found in his speeches, without the detail or connection, I shall be very ready to give the point up.

In logic Fox was inferior to Pitt—indeed, in all the formalities of eloquence, in which the latter excelled as much as he was deficient in the soul of substance. When I say that Pitt was superior to Fox in logic, I mean that he excelled him in the formal division of the subject, in always keeping it in view, as far as he chose; in being able to detect any deviation from it in others; in the management of his general topics; in being aware of the mood and figure in which the argument must move, with all its non-essentials, dilemmas, and alternatives; in never committing himself, nor ever suffering his antagonist to occupy an inch of the plainest ground, but under cover of a syllogism. He had more of "the dazzling fence of argument," as it has been called. He was, in short, better at his weapon. But then, unfortunately, it was only a dagger of lath that the wind could turn aside; whereas Fox wore a good trusty blade, of solid metal, and real execution.

I shall not trouble myself to inquire whether Fox was a man of strict virtue and principle; or in other words, how far he was one of those who screw themselves up to a certain pitch of ideal perfection, who, as it were, set themselves in the stocks of morality, and make mouths at their own situation. He was not one of that tribe, and shall not be tried by their self-denying ordinances. But he was endowed with one of the most excellent natures that ever fell to the lot of any of God's creatures. It has been said, that "an honest man's the noblest work of God." There is indeed a purity, a rectitude, an integrity of heart, a freedom from every selfish bias and sinister motive, a manly simplicity and noble disinterestedness of feeling, which is in my opinion to be preferred before every other gift of nature or art. There is a greatness of soul that is superior to all the brilliancy of the understanding. This strength of moral character, which is not only a more valuable but a rarer quality than strength of understanding (as we are oftener led astray by the narrowness of our feelings, than want of knowledge), Fox possessed in the highest degree. He was superior to every kind of jealousy,

of suspicion, of malevolence; to every narrow and sordid motive. He was perfectly above every species of duplicity, of low art and cunning. He judged of everything in the downright sincerity of his nature, without being able to impose upon himself by any hollow disguise, or to lend his support to anything unfair or dishonourable. He had an innate love of truth, of justice, of probity, of whatever was generous or liberal. Neither his education, nor his connections, nor his situation in life, nor the low intrigues and virulence of party, could ever alter the simplicity of his taste, nor the candid openness of his nature. There was an elastic force about his heart, a freshness of social feeling, a warm glowing humanity, which remained unimpaired to the last. He was by nature a gentleman. By this I mean that he felt a certain deference and respect for the person of every man; he had an unaffected frankness and benignity in his behaviour to others, the utmost liberality in judging of their conduct and motives. A refined humanity constitutes the character of a gentleman. He was the true friend of his country, as far as it is possible for a statesman to be so. But his love of his country did not consist in his hatred of the rest of mankind. I shall conclude this account by repeating what Burke said of him at a time when his testimony was of the most value. "To his great and masterly understanding he joined the utmost possible degree of moderation: he was of the most artless, candid, open, and benevolent disposition; disinterested in the extreme; of a temper mild and placable, even to a fault; and without one drop of gall in his constitution."

TUCKER'S "LIGHT OF NATURE PURSUED."

[*An abridgement of The Light of Nature Pursued, by Abraham Tucker, Esq., originally published in seven volumes, under the name of Edward Search, Esq.*, 1807.]

. . . A good abridgement ought to contain just as much as we should wish to recollect of a book; it should give back (only in a more perfect manner) to a reader well acquainted with the original, "the image of his mind," so that he would miss no favourite passage, none of the prominent parts, or distinguishing features of the work. . . . As to the pains and labour it has cost me, or the time I have devoted to it, I shall say nothing. However, if any one should be scrupulous on that head, I might answer, as Sir Joshua Reynolds is said to have done to some person who cavilled at the price of a picture, and desired to know how long he had been doing it, "All my life."

Of the work itself, I can speak with more confidence. I do not know of any work in the shape of a philosophical treatise that contains so much good sense so agreeably expressed. The character of the work is, in this respect, altogether singular. Amidst all the abstruseness of the most subtle disquisitions, it is as familiar as Montaigne, and as wild and entertaining as John Buncle. To the ingenuity and closeness of the metaphysician, he unites the practical knowledge of the man of the world, and the utmost sprightliness, and even levity of imagination. He is the only philosopher who appears to have had his senses always *about him*, or to have possessed the enviable faculty of attending at the same time to what was passing in his own mind, and what was going on without him. He applied everything to the purposes of philosophy; he could not see anything, the most familiar objects or the commonest events, without connecting them with the illustration of some difficult problem. The tricks of a young kitten, or a little child at play, were sure to suggest to him some useful observation, or nice distinction. To this habit he was, no doubt, indebted for what Paley

justly calls "his unrivalled power of illustration." To be convinced that he possessed this power in the highest degree, it is only necessary to look into almost any page of his writings. . . .

The great merit of our author's writings is undoubtedly that sound, practical, comprehensive good sense, which is to be found in every part of them. What is, I believe, the truest test of fine sense, is that affecting simplicity in his observations, which proceeds from their extreme truth and liveliness. Whatever recalls strongly to our remembrance the common feelings of human nature, and marks distinctly the changes that take place in the human breast, must always be accompanied with some sense of emotion; for our own nature can never be indifferent to us. . . .

Had our author been a vain man, his situation would not have been an enviable one. Even the sternest stoic of us all wishes at least for some person to enter into his views and feelings, and confirm him in the opinion he entertains of himself. But he does not seem to have had his spirits once cheered by the animating cordial of friendly sympathy. Discouraged by his friends, neglected by the public, and ridiculed by the reviewers, he still drew sufficient encouragement from the testimony of his own mind, and the inward consciousness of truth. He still pursued his inquiries with the same calmness and industry, and entered into the little round of his amusements with the same cheerfulness as ever. He rested satisfied with the enjoyment of himself, and of his own faculties; and was not disgusted with his simple employments, because they made no noise in the world. He did not seek for truth as the echo of loud folly; and he did not desist from the exercise of his own reason, because he could make no impression on ignorance and vulgarity. He could contemplate the truth by its own clear light, without the aid of the false lustre and glittering appearance which it assumes in the admiring eyes of the beholders. He sought for his reward, where only the philosopher will find it, in the secret approbation of his own heart, and the clear convictions of an enlightened understanding. The man of deep reflection is not likely to gain much popular applause; and he does not stand in need of it. He has learned to live upon his own stock, and can build his self-esteem on a better foundation than that of vanity. I cannot help mentioning, that though Mr. Tucker was blind when he wrote the last volumes of his work, which he did with a machine contrived by himself, he has not said a word of this circumstance: this would be with me a sufficient trait of his character.

[*The Round Table; a Collection of Essays on Literature, Men and Manners*, 2 vols., 1817. The chief portion of these Essays originally appeared in the *Examiner*, in 1815–1817. Twelve of the fifty-two were by Leigh Hunt. Three editions have been published.]

THE LOVE OF LIFE.

It is our intention, in the course of these papers, occasionally to expose certain vulgar errors, which have crept into our reasonings on men and manners. Perhaps one of the most interesting of these is that which relates to the source of our general attachment to life. We are not going to enter into the question, whether life is, on the whole, to be regarded as a blessing, though we are by no means inclined to adopt the opinion of that sage who thought "that the best thing that could have happened to a man was never to have been born, and the next best to have died the moment after he came into existence." The common argument, however, which is made use of to prove the value of life, from the strong desire which almost every one feels for its continuance, appears to be altogether inconclusive. The wise and the foolish, the weak and the strong, the lame and the blind, the prisoner and the free, the prosperous and the wretched, the beggar and the king, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, from the little child who tries to leap over his own shadow to the old man who stumbles blindfold on his grave —all feel this desire in common. Our notions with respect to the importance of life, and our attachment to it, depend on a principle which has very little to do with its happiness or its misery.

The love of life is, in general, the effect, not of our enjoyments, but of our passions. We are not attached to it so much for its own sake, or as it is connected with happiness, as because it is necessary to action. Without life there can be no action—no objects of pursuit—no restless desires—no tormenting passions. Hence it is that we fondly cling to it—that we dread its termination as the close, not of enjoyment, but of hope. The proof that our attachment to life is not absolutely owing to the immediate satisfaction we find in it is, that those persons are commonly found most loth to part with it who have the least enjoyment of it, and who have

the greatest difficulties to struggle with, as losing gamesters are the most desperate. And further, there are not many persons who, with all their pretended love of life, would not, if it had been in their power, have melted down the longest life to a few hours. "The schoolboy," says Addison, "counts the time till the return of the holidays; the minor longs to be of age; the lover is impatient till he is married." "Hope and fantastic expectations spend much of our lives; and while with passion we look for a coronation, or the death of an enemy, or a day of joy, passing from fancy to possession without any intermediate notices, we throw away a precious year."—(Jeremy Taylor.) We would willingly, and without remorse, sacrifice not only the present moment, but all the interval (no matter how long) that separates us from any favourite object. We chiefly look upon life, then, as the means to an end. Its common enjoyments and its daily evils are alike disregarded for any idle purpose we have in view. It should seem as if there were a few green sunny spots in the desert of life, to which we are always hastening forward; we eye them wistfully in the distance, and care not what perils or suffering we endure, so that we arrive at them at last. However weary we may be of the same stale round—however sick of the past—however hopeless of the future—the mind still revolts at the thought of death, because the fancied possibility of good, which always remains with life, gathers strength as it is about to be torn from us for ever, and the dullest scene looks bright compared with the darkness of the grave. Our reluctance to part with existence evidently does not depend on the calm and even current of our lives, but on the force and impulse of the passions. Hence that indifference to death which has been sometimes remarked in people who lead a solitary and peaceful life in remote and barren districts. The pulse of life in them does not beat strong enough to occasion any violent revulsion of the frame when it ceases. He who treads the green mountain turf, or he who sleeps beneath it, enjoys an almost equal quiet. The death of those persons has always been accounted happy who had attained their utmost wishes, who had nothing left to regret or desire. Our repugnance to death increases in proportion to our consciousness of having lived in vain—to the violence of our efforts, and the keenness of our disappointments—and to our earnest desire to find in the future, if possible, a rich amends for the past. We may be said to nurse our existence with the greatest tenderness, according to the pain it has cost us; and feel at every step of our varying progress the truth of that line of the poet—

"An ounce of sweet is worth a pound of sour."

The love of life is in fact the sum of all our passions and of all our enjoyments; but these are by no means the same thing, for the vehemence of our passion is irritated not less by disappointment than by the prospect of success. Nothing seems to be a match for this general tenaciousness of existence, but such an extremity either of bodily or mental suffering as destroys at once the power both of habit and imagination. In short, the question whether life is accompanied with a greater quantity of pleasure or pain, may be fairly set aside as frivolous, and of no practical utility; for our attachment to life depends on our interest in it, and it cannot be denied that we have more interest in this moving busy scene, agitated with a thousand hopes and fears, and checkered with every diversity of joy and sorrow, than in a dreary blank. To be something is better than to be nothing, because we can feel no interest in *nothing*. Passion, imagination, self-will, the sense of power, the very consciousness of our existence, bind us to life, and hold us fast in its chains, as by a magic spell, in spite of every other consideration. Nothing can be more philosophical than the reasoning which Milton puts into the mouth of the fallen angel—

> "And that must end us, that must be our cure—
> To be no more. Sad cure! For who would lose,
> Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
> Those thoughts that wander through eternity,
> To perish rather, swallow'd up and lost
> In the wide womb of uncreated night,
> Devoid of sense and motion?"

Nearly the same account may be given in answer to the question which has been asked, *Why so few tyrants kill themselves?* In the first place, they are never satisfied with the mischief they have done, and cannot quit their hold of power after all sense of pleasure is fled. Besides, they absurdly argue from the means of happiness placed within their reach to the end itself; and, dazzled by the pomp and pageantry of a throne, cannot relinquish the persuasion that they *ought* to be happier than other men. The prejudice of opinion, which attaches us to life, is in them stronger than in others, and incorrigible to experience. The great are life's fools—dupes of the splendid shadows that surround them, and wedded to the very mockeries of opinion.

Whatever is our situation or pursuit in life, the result will be much the same. The strength of the passion seldom corresponds to the pleasure we find in its indulgence. The miser "robs himself to increase his store; the ambitious man toils up a slippery precipice only

to be tumbled headlong from its height; the lover is infatuated with the charms of his mistress, exactly in proportion to the mortifications he has received from her. Even those who succeed in nothing—who, as it has been emphatically expressed,

> "Are made desperate by too quick a sense
> Of constant infelicity; cut off
> From peace like exiles, on some barren rock,
> Their life's sad prison, with no more of ease
> Than sentinels between two armies set"—

are yet as unwilling as others to give over the unprofitable strife: their harassed feverish existence refuses rest, and frets the languor of exhausted hope into the torture of unavailing regret. The exile, who has been unexpectedly restored to his country and to liberty, often finds his courage fail with the accomplishment of all his wishes, and the struggle of life and hope ceases at the same instant.

We once more repeat, that we do not, in the foregoing remarks, mean to enter into a comparative estimate of the value of human life, but merely to show that the strength of our attachment to it is a very fallacious test of its happiness.

LOVE OF THE COUNTRY.

[This letter is incorporated in the critical remarks on Thomson and Cowper in *Lectures on the English Poets*, 1818.]

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE ROUND TABLE."

SIR,—I do not know that any one has ever explained satisfactorily the true source of our attachment to natural objects, or of that soothing emotion which the sight of the country hardly ever fails to infuse into the mind. Some persons have ascribed this feeling to the natural beauty of the objects themselves; others to the freedom from care, the silence and tranquillity, which scenes of retirement afford; others to the healthy and innocent employments of a country life; others to the simplicity of country manners, and others to different causes; but none to the right one. All these causes may, I believe, have a share in producing this feeling; but there is another more general principle, which has been left untouched, and which I

shall here explain, endeavouring to be as little sentimental as the subject will admit.

Rousseau, in his "Confessions"—the most valuable of all his works—relates that, when he took possession of his room at Annecy, at the house of his beloved mistress and friend, he found that he could see "a little spot of green" from his window, which endeared his situation the more to him, because, he says, it was the first time he had had this object constantly before him since he left Boissy, the place where he was at school when a child. Some such feeling as that here described will be found lurking at the bottom of all our attachments of this sort. Were it not for the recollections habitually associated with them, natural objects could not interest the mind in the manner they do. No doubt the sky is beautiful; the clouds sail majestically along its bosom; the sun is cheering; there is something exquisitely graceful in the manner in which a plant or tree puts forth its branches; the motion with which they bend and tremble in the evening breeze is soft and lovely; there is music in the babbling of a brook; the view from the top of a mountain is full of grandeur; nor can we behold the ocean with indifference. Or, as the minstrel sweetly sings—

> "Oh, how can'st thou renounce the boundless store
> Of charms which Nature to her vot'ry yields?
> The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
> The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields;
> All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
> And all that echoes to the song of even;
> All that the mountain's sheltering bosom shields,
> And all the dread magnificence of heaven—
> Oh, how can'st thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven!"

It is not, however, the beautiful and magnificent alone that we admire in Nature; the most insignificant and the rudest objects are often found connected with the strongest emotions; we become attached to the most common and familiar images, as to the face of a friend whom we have long known, and from whom we have received many benefits. It is because natural objects have been associated with the sports of our childhood, with air and exercise, with our feelings in solitude, when the mind takes the strongest hold of things, and clings with the fondest interest to whatever strikes its attention; with change of place, the pursuit of new scenes, and thoughts of distant friends: it is because they have surrounded us in almost all situations, in joy and in sorrow, in pleasure and in pain—because they have been one chief source and nourishment of our feelings, and a part of our being, that we love them as we do ourselves.

There is, generally speaking, the same foundation for our love of Nature as for all our habitual attachments, namely, association of ideas. But this is not all. That which distinguishes this attachment from others is the transferable nature of our feelings with respect to physical objects, the associations connected with any one object extending to the whole class. My having been attached to any particular person does not make me feel the same attachment to the next person I may chance to meet; but if I have once associated strong feelings of delight with the objects of natural scenery, the tie becomes indissoluble, and I shall ever after feel the same attachment to other objects of the same sort. I remember, when I was abroad, the trees and grass and wet leaves rustling in the walks of the Tuileries seemed to be as much English, to be as much the same trees and grass that I had always been used to, as the sun shining over my head was the same sun which I saw in England; the faces only were foreign to me. Whence comes this difference? It arises from our always imperceptibly connecting the idea of the individual with man, and only the idea of the class with natural objects. In the one case, the external appearance or physical structure is the least thing to be attended to; in the other, it is everything. The springs that move the human form, and make it friendly or adverse to me, lie hid within it. There is an infinity of motives, passions, and ideas contained in that narrow compass, of which I know nothing, and in which I have no share. Each individual is a world to himself, governed by a thousand contradictory and wayward impulses. I can, therefore, make no inference from one individual to another; nor can my habitual sentiments, with respect to any individual, extend beyond himself to others. But it is otherwise with respect to Nature. There is neither hypocrisy, caprice, nor mental reservation in her favours. Our intercourse with her is not liable to accident or change, interruption or disappointment. She smiles on us still the same. Thus, to give an obvious instance, if I have once enjoyed the cool shade of a tree, and been lulled into a deep repose by the sound of a brook running at its feet, I am sure that wherever I can find a tree and a brook I can enjoy the pleasure again. Hence, when I imagine these objects, I can easily form a mystic personification of the friendly power that inhabits them, dryad or naïad, offering its cool fountain or its tempting shade. Hence the origin of the Grecian mythology. All objects of the same kind being the same, not only in their appearance but in their practical uses, we habitually confound them together under the same general idea; and whatever fondness we may have conceived for one is immediately placed to the common account. The most

opposite kinds and remote trains of feeling gradually go to enrich the same sentiment; and in our love of Nature there is all the force of individual attachment combined with the most airy abstraction. It is this circumstance which gives that refinement, expansion, and wild interest to feelings of this sort, when strongly excited, which every one must have experienced who is a true lover of Nature. The sight of the setting sun does not affect me so much from the beauty of the object itself, from the glory kindled through the glowing skies, the rich broken columns of light, or the dying streaks of day, as that it indistinctly recalls to me numberless thoughts and feelings with which, through many a year and season, I have watched his bright descent in the warm summer evenings, or beheld him struggling to cast a "farewell sweet" through the thick clouds of winter. I love to see the trees first covered with leaves in the spring, the primroses peeping out from some sheltered bank, and the innocent lambs running races on the soft green turf; because at that birth-time of Nature I have always felt sweet hopes and happy wishes—which have not been fulfilled! The dry reeds rustling on the side of a stream—the woods swept by the loud blast—the dark massy foliage of autumn—the grey trunks and naked branches of the trees in winter—the sequestered copse and wide-extended heath—the warm sunny showers and December snows—have all charms for me; there is no object, however trifling or rude, that has not, in some mood or other, found the way to my heart; and I might say, in the words of the poet:

> "To me the meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

Thus Nature is a kind of universal home, and every object it presents to us an old acquaintance with unaltered looks:

> ——— "Nature did ne'er betray
> The heart that lov'd her, but through all the years
> Of this our life, it is her privilege
> To lead from joy to joy."

For there is that consent and mutual harmony among all her works—one undivided spirit pervading them throughout—that, if we have once knit ourselves in hearty fellowship to any of them, they will never afterwards appear as strangers to us, but, whichever way we turn, we shall find a secret power to have gone out before us, moulding them into such shapes as fancy loves, informing them with life and sympathy, bidding them put on their festive looks and gayest attire at our approach, and to pour all their sweets and choicest treasures at our feet. For him, then, who has well

acquainted himself with Nature's works, she wears always one face, and speaks the same well-known language, striking on the heart, amidst unquiet thoughts and the tumult of the world, like the music of one's native tongue heard in some far-off country.

We do not connect the same feelings with the works of Art as with those of Nature, because we refer them to man, and associate with them the separate interests and passions which we know belong to those who are the authors or possessors of them. Nevertheless, there are some such objects, as a cottage or a village church, which excite in us the same sensations as the sight of Nature, and which are, indeed, almost always included in descriptions of natural scenery.

> "Or from the mountain's sides
> View wilds and swelling floods,
> And hamlets brown, and dim-discover'd spires,
> And hear their simple bell."

Which is in part, no doubt, because they are surrounded with natural objects, and, in a populous country, inseparable from them; and also because the human interest they excite relates to manners and feelings which are simple, common, such as all can enter into, and which, therefore, always produce a pleasing effect upon the mind.

THE TENDENCY OF SECTS.

THERE is a natural tendency in sects to narrow the mind.

The extreme stress laid upon differences of minor importance, to the neglect of more general truths and broader views of things, gives an inverted bias to the understanding; and this bias is continually increased by the eagerness of controversy, and captious hostility to the prevailing system. A party-feeling of this kind once formed will insensibly communicate itself to other topics; and will be too apt to lead its votaries to a contempt for the opinions of others, a jealousy of every difference of sentiment, and a disposition to arrogate all sound principle as well as understanding to themselves and those who think with them. We can readily conceive how such persons, from fixing too high a value on the practical pledge which they have given of the independence and sincerity of their opinions, come at last to entertain a suspicion of every one else as acting under the shackles of prejudice or the mask of hypocrisy. All those who have not given in their unqualified protests

against received doctrines and established authority, are supposed to labour under an acknowledged incapacity to form a rational determination on any subject whatever. Any argument, not having the presumption of singularity in its favour, is immediately set aside as nugatory. There is, however, no prejudice so strong as that which arises from a fancied exemption from all prejudice. For this last implies not only the practical conviction that it is right, but the theoretical assumption that it cannot be wrong. From considering all objections as in this manner "null and void," the mind becomes so thoroughly satisfied with its own conclusions as to render any further examination of them superfluous, and confounds its exclusive pretensions to reason with the absolute possession of it. Those who, from their professing to submit everything to the test of reason, have acquired the name of Rational Dissenters, have their weak sides as well as other people; nor do we know of any class of disputants more disposed to take their opinions for granted than those who call themselves Freethinkers. A long habit of objecting to everything establishes a monopoly in the right of contradiction—a prescriptive title to the privilege of starting doubts and difficulties in the common belief, without being liable to have our own called in question. There cannot be a more infallible way to prove that we must be in the right, than by maintaining roundly that every one else is in the wrong. Not only the opposition of sects to one another, but their unanimity among themselves, strengthens their confidence in their peculiar notions. They feel themselves invulnerable behind the double fence of sympathy with themselves and antipathy to the rest of the world. Backed by the zealous support of their followers, they become equally intolerant with respect to the opinions of others and tenacious of their own. They fortify themselves within the narrow circle of their new-fangled prejudices; the whole exercise of their right of private judgment is after a time reduced to the repetition of a set of watchwords, which have been adopted as the shibboleth of the party; and their extremest points of faith pass as current as the bead-roll and legends of the Catholics, or St. Athanasius' Creed and the Thirty-nine Articles. We certainly are not going to recommend the establishment of articles of faith, or implicit assent to them, as favourable to the progress of philosophy; but neither has the spirit of opposition to them this tendency, as far as relates to its immediate effects, however useful it may be in its remote consequences. The spirit of controversy substitutes the irritation of personal feeling for the independent exertion of the understanding; and when this irritation ceases, the mind flags for want of a sufficient stimulus to urge it on. It dis-

charges all its energy with its spleen. Besides, this perpetual cavilling with the opinions of others, detecting petty flaws in their arguments, calling them to a literal account for their absurdities, and squaring their doctrines by a pragmatical standard of our own, is necessarily adverse to any great enlargement of mind or original freedom of thought.[1] The constant attention bestowed on a few contested points, by at once flattering our pride, our prejudices, and our indolence, supersedes more general inquiries; and the bigoted controversialist, by dint of repeating a certain formula of belief, shall not only convince himself that all those who differ from him are undoubtedly wrong on that point, but that their knowledge on all others must be comparatively slight and superficial. We have known some very worthy and well-informed Biblical critics, who, by virtue of having discovered that one was not three, or that the same body could not be in two places at once, would be disposed to treat the whole Council of Trent, with Father Paul at their head, with very little deference, and to consider Leo X., with all his court, as no better than drivellers. Such persons will hint to you, as an additional proof of his genius, that Milton was a Nonconformist, and will excuse the faults of "Paradise Lost," as Dr. Johnson magnified them, because the author was a Republican. By the all-sufficiency of their merits in believing certain truths which have been "hid from ages," they are elevated, in their own imagination, to a higher sphere of intellect, and are released from the necessity of pursuing the more ordinary tracks of inquiry. Their faculties are imprisoned in a few favourite dogmas, and they cannot break through the trammels of a sect. Hence we may remark a hardness and setness in the ideas of those who have been brought up in this way, an aversion to those finer and more delicate operations of the intellect, of taste, and genius, which require greater flexibility and variety of thought, and do not afford the same opportunity for dogmatical assertion and controversial cabal. The distaste of the Puritans, Quakers, &c., to pictures, music, poetry, and the fine arts in general, may be traced to this source as much as to their affected disdain of them, as not sufficiently spiritual and remote from the gross impurity of sense.

[1] The Dissenters in this country (if we except the founders of sects, who fall under a class by themselves) have produced only two remarkable men, Priestley and Jonathan Edwards. The work of the latter on the Will is written with as much power of logic, and more in the true spirit of philosophy, than any other metaphysical work in the language. His object throughout is not to perplex the question, but to satisfy his own mind and the reader's. In general, the principle of Dissent arises more from want of sympathy and imagination, than from strength of reason. The spirit of contradiction is not the spirit of philosophy.

We learn from the interest we take in things, and according to the number of things in which we take an interest. Our ignorance of the real value of different objects and pursuits will in general keep pace with our contempt for them. To set out with denying common sense to every one else is not the way to be wise ourselves; nor shall we be likely to learn much if we suppose that no one can teach us anything worth knowing. Again, a contempt for the habits and manners of the world is as prejudicial as a contempt for its opinions. A puritanical abhorrence of everything that does not fall in with our immediate prejudices and customs must effectually cut us off, not only from a knowledge of the world and of human nature, but of good and evil, of vice and virtue—at least, if we can credit the assertion of Plato (which, to some degree, we do), that the knowledge of everything implies the knowledge of its opposite. "There is some soul of goodness in things evil." A most respectable sect among ourselves (we mean the Quakers) have carried this system of negative qualities nearly to perfection. They labour diligently, and with great success, to exclude all ideas from their minds which they might have in common with others. On the principle that "evil communications corrupt good manners," they retain a virgin purity of understanding and laudable ignorance of all liberal arts and sciences; they take every precaution, and keep up a perpetual quarantine against the infection of other people's vices—or virtues; they pass through the world like figures cut out of pasteboard or wood, turning neither to the right nor the left; and their minds are no more affected by the example of the follies, the pursuits, the pleasures, or the passions of mankind, than the clothes which they wear. Their ideas want *airing;* they are the worse for not being used; for fear of soiling them they keep them folded up and laid by in a sort of mental clothes-press through the whole of their lives. They take their notions on trust from one generation to another—like the scanty cut of their coats—and are so wrapped up in these traditional maxims, and so pin their faith on them, that one of the most intelligent of this class of people, not long ago, assured us that "war was a thing that was going quite out of fashion." This abstract sort of existence may have its advantages, but it takes away all the ordinary sources of a moral imagination, as well as strength of intellect. Interest is the only link that connects them with the world. We can understand the high enthusiasm and religious devotion of monks and anchorites, who gave up the world and its pleasures to dedicate themselves to a sublime contemplation of a future state; but the sect of the Quakers, who have transplanted the maxims of the desert into manufacturing towns and populous

cities—who have converted the solitary cells of the religious orders into counting-houses, their beads into ledgers, and keep a regular "debtor and creditor" account between this world and the next—puzzle us mightily. The Dissenter is not vain, but conceited—that is, he makes up by his own good opinion for the want of the cordial admiration of others; but this often stands their self-love in so good stead that they need not envy their dignified opponents who repose on lawn-sleeves and ermine. The unmerited obloquy and dislike to which they are exposed has made them cold and reserved in their intercourse with society. The same cause will account for the dryness and general homeliness of their style. They labour under a sense of the want of public sympathy. They pursue truth, for its own sake, into its private recesses and obscure corners. They have to dig their way along a narrow underground passage. It is not their object to shine; they have none of the usual incentives of vanity—light, airy, and ostentatious. Archiepiscopal sees and mitres do not glitter in their distant horizon. They are not wafted on the wings of fancy, fanned by the breath of popular applause. The voice of the world, the tide of opinion, is not with them. They do not, therefore, aim at *éclat*—at outward pomp and show. They have a plain ground to work upon, and they do not attempt to embellish it with idle ornaments. It would be in vain to strew the flowers of poetry round the borders of the Unitarian controversy.

There is one quality common to all sectaries, and that is, a principle of strong fidelity. They are the safest partisans and the steadiest friends. Indeed, they are almost the only people who have any idea of an abstract attachment, either to a cause or to individuals, from a sense of duty, independently of prosperous or adverse circumstances, and in spite of opposition.

ON "JOHN BUNCLE."

John Buncle is the English Rabelais. This is an author with whom, perhaps, many of our readers are not acquainted, and whom we therefore wish to introduce to their notice. As most of our countrymen delight in English generals and in English admirals, in English courtiers and in English kings, so our great delight is in English authors.

The soul of Francis Rabelais passed into John Amory, the author of "The Life and Adventures of John Buncle." Both were physicians,

and enemies of too much gravity. Their great business was to enjoy life. Rabelais indulges his spirit of sensuality in wine, in dried neats-tongues, in Bologna sausages, in botargos. John Buncle shows the same symptoms of inordinate satisfaction in tea and bread-and-butter. While Rabelais roared with Friar John and the monks, John Buncle gossiped with the ladies, and with equal and uncontrolled gaiety. These two authors possessed all the insolence of health, so that their works give a fillip to the constitution; but they carried off the exuberance of their natural spirits in different ways. The title of one of Rabelais' chapters (and the contents answer to the title) is, "How they chirped over their cups." The title of a corresponding chapter in "John Buncle" would run thus: "The author is invited to spend the evening with the divine Miss Hawkins, and goes accordingly; with the delightful conversation that ensued." Natural philosophers are said to extract sunbeams from ice; our author has performed the same feat upon the the cold quaint subtleties of theology. His constitutional alacrity overcomes every obstacle. He converts the thorns and briars of controversial divinity into a bed of roses. He leads the most refined and virtuous of their sex through the mazes of inextricable problems with the air of a man walking a minuet in a drawing-room; mixes up in the most natural and careless manner the academy of compliments with the rudiments of algebra; or passes with rapturous indifference from the First of St. John and a disquisition on the Logos to the no less metaphysical doctrines of the principle of self-preservation or the continuation of the species. "John Buncle" is certainly one of the most singular productions in the language, and herein lies its peculiarity. It is a Unitarian romance, and one in which the soul and body are equally attended to. The hero is a great philosopher, mathematician, anatomist, chemist, philologist, and divine, with a good appetite, the best spirits, and an amorous constitution, who sets out on a series of strange adventures to propagate his philosophy, his divinity, and his species, and meets with a constant succession of accomplished females, adorned with equal beauty, wit, and virtue, who are always ready to discuss all kinds of theoretical and practical points with him. His angels—and all his women are angels—have all taken their degrees in more than one science: love is natural to them. He is sure to find

"A mistress and a saint in every grove."

Pleasure and business, wisdom and mirth, take their turns with the most agreeable regularity: *A jocis ad seria, in seriis vicissim ad jocos*

transire. After a chapter of calculations in fluxions, or on the descent of tongues, the lady and gentleman fall from Platonics to hoydening, in a manner as truly edifying as anything in the scenes of Vanbrugh or Sir George Etherege. No writer ever understood so well the art of relief. The effect is like travelling in Scotland, and coming all of a sudden to a spot of habitable ground. His mode of making love is admirable. He takes it quite easily, and never thinks of a refusal. His success gives him confidence, and his confidence gives him success. For example: in the midst of one of his rambles in the mountains of Cumberland he unexpectedly comes to an elegant country-seat, where, walking on the lawn with a book in her hand, he sees a most enchanting creature, the owner of the mansion. Our hero is on fire, leaps the ha-ha which separates them, presents himself before the lady with an easy but respectful air, begs to know the subject of her meditation; they enter into conversation, mutual explanations take place, a declaration of love is made, and the wedding-day is fixed for the following Tuesday. Our author now leads a life of perfect happiness with his beautiful Miss Noel, in a charming solitude, for a few weeks, till, on his return from one of his rambles in the mountains, he finds her a corpse. He "*sits with his eyes shut for seven days*," absorbed in silent grief; he then bids adieu to melancholy reflections—not being one of that sect of philosophers who think that "man was made to mourn"—takes horse, and sets out for the nearest watering-place. As he alights at the first inn on the road, a lady dressed in a rich green riding-habit steps out of a coach; John Buncle hands her into the inn, they drink tea together, they converse, they find an exact harmony of sentiment, a declaration of love follows as a matter of course, and that day week they are married. Death, however, contrives to keep up the ball for him: he marries seven wives in succession, and buries them all. In short, John Buncle's gravity sat upon him with the happiest indifference possible. He danced the Hays with religion and morality with the ease of a man of fashion and of pleasure. He was determined to see fair-play between grace and nature—between his immortal and his mortal part; and, in case of any difficulty, upon the principle of "first come first served," made sure of the present hour. We sometimes suspect him of a little hypocrisy, but upon a closer inspection it appears to be only an affectation of hypocrisy. His fine constitution comes to his relief, and floats him over the shoals and quicksands that lie in his way, "most dolphin-like." You see him, from mere happiness of nature, chuckling with inward satisfaction in the midst of his periodical penances, his grave grimaces, his death's-heads and *memento moris:*

—"And there the antic sits
Mocking his state, and grinning at his pomp."

As men make use of olives to give a relish to their wine, so John Buncle made use of philosophy to give a relish to life. He stops in a ball-room at Harrogate to moralise on the small number of faces that appeared there out of those he remembered some years before; all were gone whom he saw at a still more distant period; but this casts no damper on his spirits, and he only dances the longer and better for it. He suffers nothing unpleasant to remain long upon his mind. He gives, in one place, a miserable description of two emaciated valetudinarians whom he met at an inn, supping a little mutton-broth with difficulty; but he immediately contrasts himself with them in fine relief. "While I beheld things with astonishment, the servant," he says, "brought in dinner—a pound of rump-steaks and a quart of green peas, two cuts of bread, a tankard of strong beer, and a pint of port wine; *with a fine appetite I soon despatched my mess, and over my wine, to help digestion, began to sing the following lines.*" The astonishment of the two strangers was now as great as his own had been.

We wish to enable our readers to judge for themselves of the style of our whimsical moralist, but are at a loss what to choose—whether his account of his man O'Fin, or of his friend Tom Fleming, or of his being chased over the mountains by robbers, "whisking before them like the wind away," as if it were high sport; or his address to the sun, which is an admirable piece of serious eloquence; or his character of six Irish gentlemen—Mr. Gollogher, Mr. Gallaspy, Mr. Dunkley, Mr. Makins, Mr. Monaghan, and Mr. O'Keefe—the last "descended from the Irish kings, and first-cousin to the great O'Keefe, who was buried not long ago in Westminster Abbey." He professes to give an account of these Irish gentlemen, "for the honour of Ireland, and as they were curiosities of humankind." Curiosities, indeed, but not so great as their historian!—

"Mr. Makins was the only one of the set who was not tall and handsome. He was a very low thin man, not four feet high, and had but one eye, with which he squinted most shockingly. But as he was matchless on the fiddle, sang well, and chatted agreeably, he was a favourite with the ladies. They preferred ugly Makins (as he was called) to many very handsome men. He was a Unitarian.

"Mr. Monaghan was an honest and charming fellow. This gentleman and Mr. Dunkley married ladies they fell in love with at Harrogate Wells; Dunkley had the fair Alcmena, Miss Cox of Northumberland; and Monaghan, Antiope with haughty charms

Miss Pearson of Cumberland. They lived very happy many years, and their children, I hear, are settled in Ireland!"

Gentle reader, here is the character of Mr. Gallaspy:

"Gallaspy was the tallest and strongest man I have ever seen, well-made, and very handsome: had wit and abilities, sang well, and talked with great sweetness and fluency, but was so extremely wicked that it were better for him if he had been a natural fool. By his vast strength and activity, his riches and eloquence, few things could withstand him. He was the most profane swearer I have known; fought everything, whored everything, and drank seven-in-hand—that is, seven glasses so placed between the fingers of his right hand that, in drinking, the liquor fell into the next glasses, and thereby he drank out of the first glass seven glasses at once. This was a common thing, I find from a book in my possession, in the reign of Charles II., in the madness that followed the restoration of that profligate and worthless prince. But this gentleman was the only man I ever saw who could or would attempt to do it; and he made but one gulp of whatever he drank. He did not swallow a fluid like other people, but if it was a quart, poured it in as from pitcher to pitcher. When he smoked tobacco, he always blew two pipes at once, one at each corner of his mouth, and threw the smoke out at both his nostrils. He had killed two men in duels before I left Ireland, and would have been hanged, but that it was his good fortune to be tried before a judge who never let any man suffer for killing another in this manner. (This was the late Sir John St. Leger.) He debauched all the women he could, and many whom he could not corrupt" . . . The rest of this passage would, we fear, be too rich for the "Round Table," as we cannot insert it, in the manner of Mr. Buncle, in a sandwich of theology. Suffice it to say, that the candour is greater than the candour of Voltaire's "Candide," and the modesty equal to Colley Cibber's.

To his friend Mr. Gollogher he consecrates the following irresistible *petit souvenir*:—

"He might, if he had pleased, have married any one of the most illustrious and richest women in the kingdom; but he had an aversion to matrimony, and could not bear the thoughts of a wife. Love and a bottle were his taste. He was, however, the most honourable of men in his amours, and never abandoned any woman in distress, as too many men of fortune do when they have gratified desire. All the distressed were ever sharers in Mr. Gollogher's fine estate, and especially the girls he had taken to his breast. He provided happily for them all, and left nineteen daughters he had

by several women a thousand pounds each. This was acting with a temper worthy of a man; *and to the memory of the benevolent Tom Gollogher I devote this memorandum.*"

Lest our readers should form rather a coarse idea of our author from the foregoing passages, we will conclude with another list of friends in a different style:—

"The Conniving-house (as the gentlemen of Trinity called it in my time, and long after) was a little public-house, kept by Jack Macklean, about a quarter of a mile beyond Ringsend, on the top of the beach, within a few yards of the sea. Here we used to have the finest fish at all times; and, in the season, green peas, and all the most excellent vegetables. The ale here was always extraordinary, and everything the best; which, with its delightful situation, rendered it a delightful place of a summer's evening. Many a delightful evening have I passed in this pretty thatched house with the famous Larry Grogan, who played on the bagpipes extremely well; dear Jack Lattin, matchless on the fiddle, and the most agreeable of companions; that ever-charming young fellow, Jack Wall, the most worthy, the most ingenious, the most engaging of men, the son of Counsellor Maurice Wall; and many other delightful fellows, who went in the days of their youth to the shades of eternity. When I think of them and their evening songs—'*We will go to Johnny Macklean's, to try if his ale be good or no,*' &c.—and that years and infirmities begin to oppress me—what is life?"

We have another English author, very different from the last-mentioned one, but equal in *naïveté*, and in the perfect display of personal character; we mean Izaak Walton, who wrote the "Complete Angler." That well-known work has an extreme simplicity, and an extreme interest, arising out of its very simplicity. In the description of a fishing-tackle you perceive the piety and humanity of the author's mind. This is the best pastoral in the language, not excepting Pope's or Philips's. We doubt whether Sannazarius' "Piscatory Eclogues" are equal to the scenes described by Walton on the banks of the river Lea. He gives the feeling of the open air. We walk with him along the dusty roadside, or repose on the banks of the river under a shady tree, and in watching for the finny prey imbibe what he beautifully calls "the patience and simplicity of poor honest fishermen." We accompany them to their inn at night, and partake of their simple but delicious fare, while Maud, the pretty milkmaid, at her mother's desire, sings the classical ditties of Sir Walter Raleigh. Good cheer is not neglected in this work, any more than in "John Buncle," or any other history which sets a

proper value on the good things of life. The prints in the "Complete Angler" give an additional reality and interest to the scenes it describes. While Tottenham Cross shall stand, and longer, thy work, amiable and happy old man, shall last!

THE CHARACTER OF ROUSSEAU.

MADAME DE STAEL, in her "Letters on the Writings and Character of Rousseau," gives it as her opinion "that the imagination was the first faculty of his mind, and that this faculty even absorbed all the others." And she further adds, "Rousseau had great strength of reason on abstract questions, or with respect to objects which have no reality but in the mind." Both these opinions are radically wrong. Neither imagination nor reason can properly be said to have been the original predominant faculty of his mind. The strength both of imagination and reason which he possessed was borrowed from the excess of another faculty; and the weakness and poverty of reason and imagination which are to be found in his works may be traced to the same source—namely, that these faculties in him were artificial, secondary, and dependent, operating by a power not theirs, but lent to them. The only quality which he possessed in an eminent degree, which alone raised him above ordinary men, and which gave to his writings and opinions an influence greater, perhaps, than has been exerted by any individual in modern times, was extreme sensibility, or an acute and even morbid feeling of all that related to his own impressions, to the objects and events of his life. He had the most intense consciousness of his own existence. No object that had once made an impression on him was ever after effaced. Every feeling in his mind became a passion. His craving after excitement was an appetite and a disease. His interest in his own thoughts and feelings was always wound up to the highest pitch, and hence the enthusiasm which he excited in others. He owed the power which he exercised over the opinions of all Europe, by which he created numberless disciples, and overturned established systems, to the tyranny which his feelings in the first instance exercised over himself. The dazzling blaze of his reputation was kindled by the same fire that fed upon his vitals.[1] His ideas differed from those of other men

[1] He did more towards the French Revolution than any other man. Voltaire, by his wit and penetration, had rendered superstition contemptible

only in their force and intensity. His genius was the effect of his temperament. He created nothing, he demonstrated nothing, by a pure effort of the understanding. His fictitious characters are modifications of his own being, reflections and shadows of himself. His speculations are the obvious exaggerations of a mind giving a loose to its habitual impulses, and moulding all nature to its own purposes. Hence his enthusiasm and his eloquence, bearing down all opposition. Hence the warmth and the luxuriance as well as the sameness of his descriptions. Hence the frequent verboseness of his style; for passion lends force and reality to language, and makes words supply the place of imagination. Hence the tenaciousness of his logic, the acuteness of his observations, the refinement and the inconsistency of his reasoning. Hence his keen penetration, and his strange want of comprehension of mind; for the same intense feeling which enabled him to discern the first principles of things, and seize some one view of a subject in all its ramifications, prevented him from admitting the operation of other causes which interfered with his favourite purpose, and involved him in endless wilful contradictions. Hence his excessive egotism, which filled all objects with himself, and would have occupied the universe with his smallest interest. Hence his jealousy and suspicion of others; for no attention, no respect or sympathy, could come up to the extravagant claims of his self-love. Hence his dissatisfaction with himself and with all around him; for nothing could satisfy his ardent longings after good, his restless appetite of being. Hence his feelings, overstrained and exhausted, recoiled upon themselves, and produced his love of silence and repose, his feverish aspirations after the quiet and solitude of nature. Hence in part also his quarrel with the artificial institutions and distinctions of society, which opposed so many barriers to the unrestrained indulgence of his will, and allured his imagination to scenes of pastoral simplicity or of savage life, where the passions were either not excited or left to follow their own impulse—where the petty vexations and irritating disappointments of common life had no place—and where the tormenting pursuits of arts and sciences were lost in pure animal enjoyment or indolent repose. Thus he describes the first savage wandering for ever under the shade of magnificent forests or by the side of mighty rivers, smit with the unquenchable love of nature!

and tyranny odious; but it was Rousseau who brought the feeling of irreconcilable enmity to rank and privileges, *above humanity*, home to the bosom of every man — identified it with all the pride of intellect and with the deepest yearnings of the human heart.

The best of all his works is the "Confessions," though it is that which has been least read, because it contains the fewest set paradoxes or general opinions. It relates entirely to himself; and no one was ever so much at home on this subject as he was. From the strong hold which they had taken of his mind, he makes us enter into his feelings as if they had been our own, and we seem to remember every incident and circumstance of his life as if it had happened to ourselves. We are never tired of this work, for it everywhere presents us with pictures which we can fancy to be counterparts of our own existence. The passages of this sort are innumerable. There is the interesting account of his childhood, the constraints and thoughtless liberty of which are so well described; of his sitting up all night reading romances with his father, till they were forced to desist by hearing the swallows twittering in their nests; his crossing the Alps, described with all the feelings belonging to it—his pleasure in setting out, his satisfaction in coming to his journey's end, the delight of "coming and going he knew not where;" his arriving at Turin; the figure of Madame Basile, drawn with such inimitable precision and elegance; the delightful adventure of the Château de Toune, where he passed the day with Mademoiselle G * * * * and Mademoiselle Galley; the story of his Zulietta, the proud, the charming Zulietta, whose last words, "*Va Zanetto, e studia la Matematica*," were never to be forgotten; his sleeping near Lyons in a niche of the wall, after a fine summer's day, with a nightingale perched above his head; his first meeting with Madame Warens, the pomp of sound with which he has celebrated her name, beginning "Louise Eleonore de Warens étoit une demoiselle de la Tour de Pil, noble et ancienne famille de Vevai, ville du pays de Vaud" (sounds which we still tremble to repeat); his description of her person, her angelic smile, her mouth of the size of his own; his walking out one day while the bells were chiming to vespers, and anticipating in a sort of waking dream the life he afterwards led with her, in which months and years, and life itself, passed away in undisturbed felicity; the sudden disappointment of his hopes; his transport thirty years after at seeing the same flower which they had brought home together from one of their rambles near Chambery; his thoughts in that long interval of time; his suppers with Grimm and Diderot after he came to Paris; the first idea of his prize dissertation on the savage state; his account of writing the "New Eloise," and his attachment to Madame d'Houdetot; his literary projects, his fame, his misfortunes, his unhappy temper; his last solitary retirement in the lake and island of Bienne, with his dog and his boat; his reveries and

delicious musings there—all these crowd into our minds with recollections which we do not choose to express. There are no passages in the "New Eloise" of equal force and beauty with the best descriptions in the "Confessions," if we except the excursion on the water, Julia's last letter to St. Preux, and his letter to her, recalling the days of their first loves. We spent two whole years in reading these two works, and (gentle reader, it was when we were young) in shedding tears over them,

> ——"As fast as the Arabian trees
> Their medicinal gums."

They were the happiest years of our life. We may well say of them, sweet is the dew of their memory, and pleasant the balm of their recollection! There are, indeed, impressions which neither time nor circumstances can efface.

Rousseau, in all his writings, never once lost sight of himself. He was the same individual from first to last. The springs that moved his passions never went down, the pulse that agitated his heart never ceased to beat. It was this strong feeling of interest, accumulating in his mind, which overpowers and absorbs the feelings of his readers. He owed all his power to sentiment. The writer who most nearly resembles him in our own times is the author of the "Lyrical Ballads." We see no other difference between them, than that the one wrote in prose and the other in poetry, and that prose is perhaps better adapted to express those local and personal feelings, which are inveterate habits in the mind, than poetry, which embodies its imaginary creations. We conceive that Rousseau's exclamation, "*Ah, voilà de la pervenche!*" comes more home to the mind than Mr. Wordsworth's discovery of the linnet's nest "with five blue eggs," or than his address to the cuckoo, beautiful as we think it is; and we will confidently match the citizen of Geneva's adventures on the Lake of Bienne against the Cumberland poet's floating dreams on the Lake of Grasmere. Both create an interest out of nothing, or rather out of their own feelings; both weave numberless recollections into one sentiment; both wind their own being round whatever object occurs to them. But Rousseau, as a prose-writer, gives only the habitual and personal impression. Mr. Wordsworth, as a poet, is forced to lend the colours of imagination to impressions which owe all their force to their identity with themselves, and tries to paint what is only to be felt. Rousseau, in a word, interests you in certain objects by interesting you in himself: Mr. Wordsworth would persuade you that the most insignificant objects are interesting in themselves,

because he is interested in them. If he had met with Rousseau's favourite periwinkle, he would have *translated* it into the most beautiful of flowers.

This is not imagination, but want of sense. If his jealousy of the sympathy of others makes him avoid what is beautiful and grand in nature, why does he undertake elaborately to describe other objects? *His* nature is a mere Dulcinea del Toboso, and he would make a Vashti of her. Rubens appears to have been as extravagantly attached to his three wives as Raphael was to his Fornarina; but their faces were not so classical. The three greatest egotists that we know of—that is, the three writers who felt their own being most powerfully and exclusively—are Rousseau, Wordsworth, and Benvenuto Cellini. As Swift somewhere says, we defy the world to furnish out a fourth.

GOOD-NATURE.

Lord Shaftesbury somewhere remarks that a great many people pass for very good-natured persons for no other reason than because they care about nobody but themselves; and consequently, as nothing annoys them but what touches their own interest, they never irritate themselves unnecessarily about what does not concern them, and seem to be made of the very milk of human kindness.

Good-nature—or what is often considered as such—is the most selfish of all the virtues; it is, nine times out of ten, mere indolence of disposition. A good-natured man is, generally speaking, one who does not like to be put out of his way; and, as long as he can help it—that is, till the provocation comes home to himself—he will not. He does not create fictitious uneasiness out of the distresses of others; he does not fret and fume and make himself uncomfortable about things he cannot mend, and that no way concern him even if he could; but then there is no one who is more apt to be disconcerted by what puts him to any personal inconvenience, however trifling; who is more tenacious of his selfish indulgences, however unreasonable; or who resents more violently any interruption of his ease and comforts—the very trouble he is put to in resenting it being felt as an aggravation of the injury. A person of this character feels no emotions of anger or detestation if you tell him of the devastation of a province, or the massacre of the inhabitants of a town or the enslaving of a people; but if his dinner is spoiled by a

lump of soot falling down the chimney he is thrown into the utmost confusion, and can hardly recover a decent command of his temper for the whole day. He thinks nothing can go amiss so long as he is at his ease, though a pain in his little finger makes him so peevish and quarrelsome that nobody can come near him. Knavery and injustice in the abstract are things that by no means ruffle his temper or alter the serenity of his countenance, unless he is to be the sufferer by them; nor is he ever betrayed into a passion in answering a sophism, if he does not think it immediately directed against his own interest.

On the contrary, we sometimes meet with persons who regularly heat themselves in an argument, and get out of humour on every occasion, and make themselves obnoxious to a whole company about nothing. This is not because they are ill-tempered, but because they are in earnest. Good-nature is a hypocrite; it tries to pass off its love of its own ease, and indifference to everything else, for a particular softness and mildness of disposition. All people get in a passion and lose their temper if you offer to strike them or cheat them of their money—that is, if you interfere with that which they are really interested in. Tread on the heel of one of these good-natured persons—who do not care if the whole world is in flames—and see how he will bear it. If the truth were known, the most disagreeable people are the most amiable. They are the only persons who feel an interest in what does not concern them. They have as much regard for others as they have for themselves. They have as many vexations and causes of complaint as there are in the world. They are general righters of wrongs and redressers of grievances. They not only are annoyed by what they can help—by an act of inhumanity done in the next street, or in a neighbouring country by their own countrymen; they not only do not claim any share in the glory, and hate it the more, the more brilliant the success; but a piece of injustice done three thousand years ago touches them to the quick. They have an unfortunate attachment to a set of abstract phrases, such as *liberty, truth, justice, humanity, honour*, which are continually abused by knaves and misunderstood by fools; and they can hardly contain themselves for spleen. They have something to keep them in perpetual hot water. No sooner is one question set at rest than another rises up to perplex them. They wear themselves to the bone in the affairs of other people, to whom they can do no manner of service, to the neglect of their own business and pleasure. They tease themselves to death about the morality of the Turks or the politics of the French. There are certain words that afflict their ears and things that lacerate their souls, and remain

a plague-spot there for ever after. They have a fellow-feeling with all that has been done, said, or thought in the world. They have an interest in all science and in all art. They hate a lie as much as a wrong, for truth is the foundation of all justice. Truth is the first thing in their thoughts, then mankind, then their country, last themselves. They love excellence and bow to fame, which is the shadow of it. Above all, they are anxious to see justice done to the dead, as the best encouragement to the living and the lasting inheritance of future generations. They do not like to see a great principle undermined, or the fall of a great man. They would sooner forgive a blow in the face than a wanton attack on acknowledged reputation. The contempt in which the French hold Shakspeare is a serious evil to them; nor do they think the matter mended when they hear an Englishman, who would be thought a profound one, say that Voltaire was a man without wit. They are vexed to see genius playing at Tom Fool and honesty turned bawd. It gives them a cutting sensation to see a number of things which, as they are unpleasant to see, we shall not here repeat. In short, they have a passion for truth; they feel the same attachment to the idea of what is right that a knave does to his interest, or that a good-natured man does to his ease; and they have as many sources of uneasiness as there are actual or supposed deviations from this standard in the sum of things, or as there is a possibility of folly and mischief in the world.

Principle is a passion for truth—an incorrigible attachment to a general proposition. Good-nature is humanity that costs nothing. No good-natured man was ever a martyr to a cause—in religion or politics. He has no idea of striving against the stream. He may become a good courtier and a loyal subject; and it is hard if he does not, for he has nothing to do in that case but to consult his ease, interest, and outward appearances. The Vicar of Bray was a good-natured man. What a pity he was but a vicar! A good-natured man is utterly unfit for any situation or office in life that requires integrity, fortitude, or generosity—any sacrifice, except of opinion, or any exertion, but to please. A good-natured man will debauch his friend's mistress, if he has an opportunity, and betray his friend sooner than share disgrace or danger with him. He will not forego the smallest gratification to save the whole world. He makes his own convenience the standard of right and wrong. He avoids the feeling of pain in himself, and shuts his eyes to the sufferings of others. He will put a malefactor or an innocent person (no matter which) to the rack, and only laugh at the uncouthness of the gestures, or wonder that he is so unmannerly as

to cry out. There is no villainy to which he will not lend a helping hand with great coolness and cordiality, for he sees only the pleasant and profitable side of things. He will assent to a falsehood with a leer of complacency, and applaud any atrocity that comes recommended in the garb of authority. He will betray his country to please a Minister, and sign the death-warrant of thousands of wretches, rather than forfeit the congenial smile, the well-known squeeze of the hand. The shrieks of death, the torture of mangled limbs, the last groans of despair, are things that shock his smooth humanity too much ever to make an impression on it; his good-nature sympathises only with the smile, the bow, the gracious salutation, the fawning answer: vice loses its sting, and corruption its poison, in the oily gentleness of his disposition. He will not hear of anything wrong in Church or State. He will defend every abuse by which anything is to be got, every dirty job, every act of every Minister. In an extreme case, a very good-natured man indeed may try to hang twelve honester men than himself to rise at the Bar, and forge the seal of the realm to continue his colleagues a week longer in office. He is a slave to the will of others, a coward to their prejudices, a tool of their vices. A good-natured man is no more fit to be trusted in public affairs than a coward or a woman is to lead an army. Spleen is the soul of patriotism and of public good. Lord Castlereagh is a good-natured man, Lord Eldon is a good-natured man, Charles Fox was a good-natured man. The last instance is the most decisive. The definition of a true patriot is *a good hater*.

A king who is a good-natured man is in a fair way of being a great tyrant. A king ought to feel concern for all to whom his power extends; but a good-natured man cares only about himself. If he has a good appetite, eats and sleeps well, nothing in the universe besides can disturb him. The destruction of the lives or liberties of his subjects will not stop him in the least of his caprices, but will concoct well with his bile, and "good digestion wait on appetite, and health on both." He will send out his mandate to kill and destroy with the same indifference or satisfaction that he performs any natural function of his body. The consequences are placed beyond the reach of his imagination, or would not affect him if they were not, for he is a fool and good-natured. A good-natured man hates more than any one else whatever thwarts his will or contradicts his prejudices; and if he has the power to prevent it, depend upon it, he will use it without remorse and without control.

There is a lower species of this character which is what is usually understood by a *well-meaning man*. A well-meaning man is one who

often does a great deal of mischief without any kind of malice. He means no one any harm, if it is not for his interest. He is not a knave, nor perfectly honest. He does not easily resign a good place. Mr. Vansittart is a well-meaning man.

The Irish are a good-natured people; they have many virtues, but their virtues are those of the heart, not of the head. In their passions and affections they are sincere, but they are hypocrites in understanding. If they once begin to calculate the consequences, self-interest prevails. An Irishman who trusts to his principles and a Scotchman who yields to his impulses are equally dangerous. The Irish have wit, genius, eloquence, imagination, affections; but they want coherence of understanding, and consequently have no standard of thought or action. Their strength of mind does not keep pace with the warmth of their feelings or the quickness of their conceptions. Their animal spirits run away with them; their reason is a jade. There is something crude, indigested, rash, and discordant in almost all that they do or say. They have no system, no abstract ideas. They are "everything by starts, and nothing long." They are a wild people. They hate whatever imposes a law on their understandings or a yoke on their wills. To betray the principles they are most bound by their own professions and the expectations of others to maintain, is with them a reclamation of their original rights, and to fly in the face of their benefactors and friends, an assertion of their natural freedom of will. They want consistency and good faith. They unite fierceness with levity. In the midst of their headlong impulses they have an undercurrent of selfishness and cunning, which in the end gets the better of them. Their feelings, when no longer excited by novelty or opposition, grow cold and stagnant. Their blood, if not heated by passion, turns to poison. They have a rancour in their hatred of any object they have abandoned proportioned to the attachment they have professed to it. Their zeal, converted against itself, is furious.

COUNTRY PEOPLE.

[From the Essay on Wordsworth's "Excursion."]

All country people hate each other. They have so little comfort that they envy their neighbours the smallest pleasure or advantage, and nearly grudge themselves the necessaries of life. From not being accustomed to enjoyment, they become hardened and averse

to it—stupid, for want of thought—selfish, for want of society. There is nothing good to be had in the country, or, if there is, they will not let you have it. They had rather injure themselves than oblige any one else. Their common mode of life is a system of wretchedness and self-denial, like what we read of among barbarous tribes. You live out of the world. You cannot get your tea and sugar without sending to the next town for it; you pay double, and have it of the worst quality. The small-beer is sure to be sour —the milk skimmed—the meat bad, or spoiled in the cooking. You cannot do a single thing you like; you cannot walk out, or sit at home, or write or read, or think or look as if you did, without being subject to impertinent curiosity. The apothecary annoys you with his complaisance; the parson with his supereiliousness. If you are poor, you are despised; if you are rich, you are feared and hated. If you do any one a favour, the whole neighbourhood is up in arms; the clamour is like that of a rookery; and the person himself, it is ten to one, laughs at you for your pains, and takes the first opportunity of showing you that he labours under no uneasy sense of obligation. There is a perpetual round of mischief-making and backbiting, for want of any better amusement. There are no shops, no taverns, no theatres, no opera, no concerts, no pictures, no public buildings, no crowded streets, no noise of coaches or of courts of law—neither courtiers nor courtesans, no literary parties, no fashionable routs, no society, no books, or knowledge of books. Vanity and luxury are the civilisers of the world and sweeteners of human life. Without objects either of pleasure or action, it grows harsh and crabbed: the mind becomes stagnant, the affections callous, and the eye dull. Man left to himself soon degenerates into a very disagreeable person. Ignorance is always bad enough; but rustic ignorance is intolerable. Aristotle has observed, that tragedy purifies the affections by terror and pity. If so, a company of tragedians should be established at the public expense in every village or hundred, as a better mode of education than either Bell's or Lancaster's. The benefits of knowledge are never so well understood as from seeing the effects of ignorance, in their naked undisguised state, upon the common country people. Their selfishness and insensibility are perhaps less owing to the hardships and privations, which make them, like people out at sea in a boat, ready to devour one another, than to their having no idea of anything beyond themselves and their immediate sphere of action. They have no knowledge of, and consequently can take no interest in, anything which is not an object of their senses and of their daily pursuits. They hate all strangers, and have generally

a nickname for the inhabitants of the next village. The two young noblemen in "Guzman d'Alfarache," who went to visit their mistresses only a league out of Madrid, were set upon by the peasants, who came round them calling out, "*A wolf!*" Those who have no enlarged or liberal ideas can have no disinterested or generous sentiments. Persons who are in the habit of reading novels and romances are compelled to take a deep interest in, and to have their affections strongly excited by, fictitious characters and imaginary situations; their thoughts and feelings are constantly carried out of themselves, to persons they never saw and things that never existed. History enlarges the mind, by familiarising us with the great vicissitudes of human affairs and the catastrophes of states and kingdoms; the study of morals accustoms us to refer our actions to a general standard of right and wrong; and abstract reasoning, in general, strengthens the love of truth, and produces an inflexibility of principle which cannot stoop to low trick and cunning. Books, in Bacon's phrase, are "a discipline of humanity." Country people have none of these advantages, nor any others to supply the place of them. Having no circulating libraries to exhaust their love of the marvellous, they amuse themselves with fancying the disasters and disgraces of their particular acquaintance. Having no hump-backed Richard to excite their wonder and abhorrence, they make themselves a bugbear of their own out of the first obnoxious person they can lay their hands on. Not having the fictitious distresses and gigantic crimes of poetry to stimulate their imagination and their passions, they vent their whole stock of spleen, malice, and invention on their friends and next-door neighbours. They get up a little pastoral drama at home, with fancied events, but real characters. All their spare time is spent in manufacturing and propagating the lie for the day, which does its office and expires. The next day is spent in the same manner. It is thus that they embellish the simplicity of rural life! The common people in civilised countries are a kind of domesticated savages. They have not the wild imagination, the passions, the fierce energies, or dreadful vicissitudes of the savage tribes, nor have they the leisure, the indolent enjoyments, and romantic superstitions which belonged to the pastoral life in milder climate and more remote periods of society. They are taken out of a state of nature, without being put in possession of the refinements of art. The customs and institutions of society cramp their imaginations without giving them knowledge. If the inhabitants of the mountainous districts described by Mr. Wordsworth are less gross and sensual than others, they are more selfish. Their egotism becomes more concentrated as they are more

insulated, and their purposes more inveterate as they have less competition to struggle with. The weight of matter which surrounds them crushes the finer sympathies. Their minds become hard and cold, like the rocks which they cultivate. The immensity of their mountains makes the human form appear little and insignificant. Men are seen crawling between heaven and earth, like insects to their graves. Nor do they regard one another more than flies on a wall. Their physiognomy expresses the materialism of their character, which has only one principle—rigid self-will. They move on with their eyes and foreheads fixed, looking neither to the right nor to the left, with a heavy slouch in their gait, and seeming as if nothing would divert them from their path. We do not admire this plodding pertinacity, always directed to the main chance. There is nothing which excites so little sympathy in our minds as exclusive selfishness. If our theory is wrong, at least it is taken from pretty close observation, and is, we think, confirmed by Mr. Wordsworth's own account.

RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY.

Religion either makes men wise and virtuous, or it makes them set up false pretences to both. In the latter case, it makes them hypocrites to themselves as well as others. Religion is, in the grosser minds, an enemy to self-knowledge. The consciousness of the presence of an all-powerful Being, who is both the witness and judge of every thought, word, and action, where it does not produce its proper effect, forces the religious man to practise every mode of deceit upon himself with respect to his real character and motives; for it is only by being wilfully blind to his own faults that he can suppose they will escape the eye of Omniscience. Consequently, the whole business of a religious man's life, if it does not conform to the strict line of his duty, may be said to be to gloss over his errors to himself, and to invent a thousand shifts and palliations in order to hoodwink the Almighty. Where he is sensible of his own delinquency, he knows that it cannot escape the penetration of his invisible Judge; and the distant penalty annexed to every offence, though not sufficient to make him desist from the commission of it, will not suffer him to rest easy till he has made some compromise with his own conscience as to his motives for committing it. As far as relates to this world, a cunning knave may take a pride in the imposition he practises upon others; and instead of striving to

conceal his true character from himself, may chuckle with inward satisfaction at the folly of those who are not wise enough to detect it. "But 'tis not so above." This shallow skin-deep hypocrisy will not serve the turn of the religious devotee, who is "compelled to give in evidence, against himself," and who must first become the dupe of his own imposture before he can flatter himself with the hope of concealment, as children hide their eyes with their hands, and fancy that no one can see them. Religious people often pray very heartily for the forgiveness of a "multitude of trespasses and sins," as a mark of humility, but we never knew them admit any one fault in particular, or acknowledge themselves in the wrong in any instance whatever. The natural jealousy of self-love is in them heightened by the fear of damnation, and they plead *Not Guilty* to every charge brought against them with all the conscious terrors of a criminal at the bar. It is for this reason that the greatest hypocrites in the world are religious hypocrites.

This quality, as it has been sometimes found united with the clerical character, is known by the name of "priestcraft." The ministers of religion are perhaps more liable to this vice than any other class of people. They are obliged to assume a greater degree of sanctity, though they have it not, and to screw themselves up to an unnatural pitch of severity and self-denial. They must keep a constant guard over themselves, have an eye always to their own persons, never relax in their gravity, nor give the least scope to their inclinations. A single slip, if discovered, may be fatal to them. Their influence and superiority depend on their pretensions to virtue and piety; and they are tempted to draw liberally on the funds of credulity and ignorance allotted for their convenient support. All this cannot be very friendly to downright simplicity of character. Besides, they are so accustomed to inveigh against the vices of others that they naturally forget that they have any of their own to correct. They see vice as an object always out of themselves, with which they have no other concern than to denounce and stigmatise it. They are only reminded of it *in the third person.* They as naturally associate sin and its consequences with their flocks as a pedagogue associates a false concord and flogging with his scholars. If we may so express it, they serve as conductors to the lightning of Divine indignation, and have only to point the thunders of the law at others. They identify themselves with that perfect system of faith and morals of which they are the professed teachers, and regard any imputation on their conduct as an indirect attack on the function to which they belong, or as compromising the authority under which they act. It is only the head of the

Popish church who assumes the title of "God's Vicegerent upon Earth;" but the feeling is nearly common to all the oracular interpreters of the will of Heaven—from the successor of St. Peter down to the simple unassuming Quaker, who, disclaiming the imposing authority of title and office, yet fancies himself the immediate organ of a preternatural impulse, and affects to speak only as the Spirit moves him.

There is another way in which the formal profession of religion aids hypocrisy: by erecting a secret tribunal, to which those who affect a more than ordinary share of it can (in case of need) appeal from the judgments of men. The religious impostor reduced to his last shift, and having no other way left to avoid the most "open and apparent shame," rejects the fallible decisions of the world, and thanks God that there is one who knows the heart. He is amenable to a higher jurisdiction, and while all is well with Heaven he can pity the errors and smile at the malice of his enemies. Whatever cuts men off from their dependence on common opinion or obvious appearances must open a door to evasion and cunning, by setting up a standard of right and wrong in every one's own breast, of the truth of which nobody can judge but the person himself. There are some fine instances in the old plays and novels (the best commentaries on human nature) of the effect of this principle in giving the last finishing to the character of duplicity. Miss Harris, in Fielding's "Amelia," is one of the most striking. Molière's Tartuffe is another instance of the facility with which religion may be perverted to the purposes of the most flagrant hypocrisy. It is an impenetrable fastness, to which this worthy person, like so many others, retires without the fear of pursuit. It is an additional disguise, in which he wraps himself up like a cloak. It is a stalking-horse, which is ready on all occasions—an invisible conscience, which goes about with him—his good genius, that becomes surety for him in all difficulties—swears to the purity of his motives—extricates him out of the most desperate circumstances—baffles detection, and furnishes a plea to which there is no answer.

The same sort of reasoning will account for the old remark, that persons who are stigmatised as nonconformists to the established religion, Jews, Presbyterians, &c., are more disposed to this vice than their neighbours. They are inured to the contempt of the world and steeled against its prejudices; and the same indifference which fortifies them against the unjust censures of mankind may be converted, as occasion requires, into a screen for the most pitiful conduct. They have no cordial sympathy with others, and therefore no sincerity in their intercourse with them. It is the necessity

of concealment, in the first instance, that produces, and is in some measure an excuse for, the habit of hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy, as it is connected with cowardice, seems to imply weakness of body or want of spirit. The impudence and insensibility which belong to it ought to suppose robustness of constitution. There is certainly a very successful and formidable class of sturdy, jolly, able-bodied hypocrites, the Friar Johns of the profession. Raphael has represented Elymas the sorcerer with a hard iron visage and large uncouth figure, made up of bones and muscles; as one not troubled with weak nerves or idle scruples—as one who repelled all sympathy with others—who was not to be jostled out of his course by their censures or suspicions, and who could break with ease through the cobweb snares which he had laid for the credulity of others, without being once entangled in his own delusions. His outward form betrays the hard, unimaginative, self-willed understanding of the sorcerer.

COMMONPLACE CRITICS.

"Nor can I think what thoughts they can conceive."

We have already given some account of commonplace people; we shall now attempt to give a description of another class of the community, who may be called (by way of distinction) commonplace critics. The former are a set of people who have no opinions of their own, and do not pretend to have any; the latter are a set of people who have no opinions of their own, but who affect to have one upon every subject you can mention. The former are a very honest, good sort of people, who are contented to pass for what they are; the latter are a very pragmatical, troublesome sort of people, who would pass for what they are not, and try to put off their commonplace notions in all companies and on all subjects as something of their own. They are of both species, the grave and the gay; and it is hard to say which is the most tiresome.

A commonplace critic has something to say upon every occasion, and he always tells you either what is not true, or what you knew before, or what is not worth knowing. He is a person who thinks by proxy and talks by rote. He differs with you, not because he thinks you are in the wrong, but because he thinks somebody else will think so. Nay, it would be well if he stopped here; but he will

undertake to misrepresent you by anticipation lest others should misunderstand you, and will set you right, not only in opinions which you have, but in those which you may be supposed to have. Thus, if you say that Bottom the weaver is a character that has not had justice done to it, he shakes his head, is afraid you will be thought extravagant, and wonders you should think the "Midsummer Night's Dream" the finest of all Shakspeare's plays. He judges of matters of taste and reasoning, as he does of dress and fashion, by the prevailing tone of good company; and you would as soon persuade him to give up any sentiment that is current there as to wear the hind-part of his coat before. By the best company, of which he is perpetually talking, he means persons who live on their own estates and other people's ideas. By the opinion of the world, to which he pays and expects you to pay, great deference, he means that of a little circle of his own, where he hears and is heard. Again, *good sense* is a phrase constantly in his mouth, by which he does not mean his own sense or that of anybody else, but the opinions of a number of persons who have agreed to take their opinions on trust from others. If any one observes that there is something better than common sense, viz., *uncommon* sense, he thinks this a bad joke. If you object to the opinions of the majority, as often arising from ignorance or prejudice, he appeals from them to the sensible and well-informed; and if you say there may be other persons as sensible and well-informed as himself and his friends, he smiles at your presumption. If you attempt to prove anything to him, it is in vain, for he is not thinking of what you say, but of what will be thought of it. The stronger your reasons the more incorrigible he thinks you; and he looks upon any attempt to expose his gratuitous assumptions as the wandering of a disordered imagination. His notions are, like plastered figures cast in a mould, as brittle as they are hollow; but they will break before you can make them give way. In fact, he is the representative of a large part of the community—the shallow, the vain, and the indolent—of those who have time to talk and are not bound to think; and he considers any deviation from the select forms of commonplace, or the accredited language of conventional impertinence, as compromising the authority under which he acts in his diplomatic capacity. It is wonderful how this class of people agree with one another; how they herd together in all their opinions; what a tact they have for folly; what an instinct for absurdity; what a sympathy in sentiment; how they find one another out by infallible signs, like Freemasons! The secret of this unanimity and strict accord is, that not any one of them ever admits any opinion that can cost the least

effort of mind in arriving at, or of courage in declaring it. Folly is as consistent with itself as wisdom; there is a certain level of thought and sentiment which the weakest minds, as well as the strongest, find out as best adapted to them; and you as regularly come to the same conclusions by looking no farther than the surface, as if you dug to the centre of the earth! You know beforehand what a critic of this class will say on almost every subject the first time he sees you, the next time, the time after that, and so on to the end of the chapter. The following list of his opinions may be relied on:—It is pretty certain that before you have been in the room with him ten minutes he will give you to understand that Shakspeare was a great but irregular genius. Again, he thinks it a question whether any one of his plays, if brought out now for the first time, would succeed. He thinks that "Macbeth" would be the most likely, from the music which has been since introduced into it. He has some doubts as to the superiority of the French school over us in tragedy, and observes that Hume and Adam Smith were both of that opinion. He thinks Milton's pedantry a great blemish in his writings, and that "Paradise Lost" has many prosaic passages in it. He conceives that genius does not always imply taste, and that wit and judgment are very different faculties. He considers Dr. Johnson as a great critic and moralist, and that his Dictionary was a work of prodigious erudition and vast industry, but that some of the anecdotes of him in "Boswell" are trifling. He conceives that Mr. Locke was a very original and profound thinker. He thinks Gibbon's style vigorous but florid. He wonders that the author of "Junius" was never found out. He thinks Pope's translation of the "Iliad" an improvement on the simplicity of the original, which was necessary to fit it to the taste of modern readers. He thinks there is a great deal of grossness in the old comedies; and that there has been a great improvement in the morals of the higher classes since the reign of Charles II. He thinks the reign of Queen Anne the golden period of our literature, but that, upon the whole, we have no English writer equal to Voltaire. He speaks of Boccaccio as a very licentious writer, and thinks the wit in Rabelais quite extravagant, though he never read either of them. He cannot get through Spenser's "Fairy Queen," and pronounces all allegorical poetry tedious. He prefers Smollett to Fielding, and discovers more knowledge of the world in "Gil Blas" than in "Don Quixote." Richardson he thinks very minute and tedious. He thinks the French Revolution has done a great deal of harm to the cause of liberty; and blames Buonaparte for being so ambitious. He reads the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews*, and thinks as they do. He is

shy of having an opinion on a new actor or a new singer, for the public do not always agree with the newspapers. He thinks that the moderns have great advantages over the ancients in many respects. He thinks Jeremy Bentham a greater man than Aristotle. He can see no reason why artists of the present day should not paint as well as Raphael or Titian. For instance, he thinks there is something very elegant and classical in Mr. Westall's drawings. He has no doubt that Sir Joshua Reynolds' Lectures were written by Burke. He considers Horne Tooke's account of the conjunction *That* very ingenious, and holds that no writer can be called elegant who uses the present for the subjunctive mood, who says *If it is* for *If it be*. He thinks Hogarth a great master of low comic humour, and Cobbett a coarse, vulgar writer. He often talks of men of liberal education, and men without education, as if that made much difference. He judges of people by their pretensions; and pays attention to their opinions according to their dress and rank in life If he meets with a fool, he does not find him out; and if he meets with any one wiser than himself, he does not know what to make of him. He thinks that manners are of great consequence to the common intercourse of life. He thinks it difficult to prove the existence of any such thing as original genius, or to fix a general standard of taste. He does not think it possible to define what wit is. In religion his opinions are liberal. He considers all enthusiasm as a degree of madness particularly to be guarded against by young minds; and believes that truth lies in the middle, between the extremes of right and wrong. He thinks that the object of poetry is to please; and that astronomy is a very pleasing and useful study. He thinks all this and a great deal more, that amounts to nothing. We wonder we have remembered one-half of it—

"For true no-meaning puzzles more than wit."

Though he has an aversion to all new ideas, he likes all new plans and matters of fact: the new Schools for All, the Penitentiary, the new Bedlam, the new steamboats, the gaslights, the new patent blacking—everything of that sort but the Bible Society. The Society for the Suppression of Vice he thinks a great nuisance, as every honest man must.

In a word, a commonplace critic is the pedant of polite conversation. He refers to the opinion of Lord M. or Lady G. with the same air of significance that the learned pedant does to the authority of Cicero or Virgil; retails the wisdom of the day, as the anecdote-monger does the wit; and carries about with him the sentiments of people of a certain respectability in life, as the dancing-master does their air or their valets their clothes.

ACTORS AND ACTING.

Players are "the abstracts and brief chronicles of the times," the motley representatives of human nature. They are the only honest hypocrites. Their life is a voluntary dream, a studied madness. The height of their ambition is to be *beside themselves*. To-day kings, to-morrow beggars, it is only when they are themselves that they are nothing. Made up of mimic laughter and tears, passing from the extremes of joy or woe at the prompter's call, they wear the livery of other men's fortunes; their very thoughts are not their own. They are, as it were, train-bearers in the pageant of life, and hold a glass up to humanity, frailer than itself. We see ourselves at second-hand in them; they show us all that we are, all that we wish to be, and all that we dread to be. The stage is an epitome, a bettered likeness, of the world, with the dull part left out; and indeed, with this omission, it is nearly big enough to hold all the rest. What brings the resemblance nearer is, that, as *they* imitate us, we, in our turn, imitate them. How many fine gentlemen do we owe to the stage! How many romantic lovers are mere Romeos in masquerade! How many soft bosoms have heaved with Juliet's sighs! They teach us when to laugh and when to weep, when to love and when to hate, upon principle and with a good grace. Wherever there is a playhouse the world will go on not amiss. The stage not only refines the manners, but it is the best teacher of morals, for it is the truest and most intelligible picture of life. It stamps the image of virtue on the mind by first softening the rude materials of which it is composed by a sense of pleasure. It regulates the passions by giving a loose to the imagination. It points out the selfish and depraved to our detestation, the amiable and generous to our admiration; and if it clothes the more seductive vices with the borrowed graces of wit and fancy, even those graces operate as a diversion to the coarser poison of experience and bad example, and often prevent or carry off the infection by inoculating the mind with a certain taste and elegance. . . .

If the stage is useful as a school of instruction, it is no less so as a source of amusement. It is the source of the greatest enjoyment at the time, and a never-failing fund of agreeable reflection afterwards. The merits of a new play or of a new actor are always among the first topics of polite conversation. One way in which public exhibitions contribute to refine and humanise mankind is by supplying them with ideas and subjects of conversation and interest in common. The progress of civilisation is in proportion to the

number of commonplaces current in society. For instance, if we meet with a stranger at an inn or in a stage-coach, who knows nothing but his own affairs, his shop, his customers, his farm, his pigs, his poultry, we can carry on no conversation with him on these local and personal matters, the only way is to let him have all the talk to himself. But if he has fortunately ever seen Mr. Liston act, this is an immediate topic of mutual conversation, and we agree together the rest of the evening in discussing the merits of that inimitable actor, with the same satisfaction as in talking over the affairs of the most intimate friend.

If the stage thus introduces us familiarly to our contemporaries, it also brings us acquainted with former times. It is an interesting revival of past ages, manners, opinions, dresses, persons, and actions —whether it carries us back to the wars of York and Lancaster, or half-way back to the heroic times of Greece and Rome, in some translation from the French, or quite back to the age of Charles II. in the scenes of Congreve and of Etherege (the gay Sir George!)— happy age, when kings and nobles led purely ornamental lives; when the utmost stretch of a morning's study went no further than the choice of a sword-knot or the adjustment of a side-curl; when the soul spoke out in all the pleasing eloquence of dress; and beaux and belles, enamoured of themselves in one another's follies, fluttered like gilded butterflies in giddy mazes through the walks of St. James's Park!

A good company of comedians, a theatre-royal judiciously managed, is your true Heralds' College—the only Antiquarian Society that is worth a rush. It is for this reason that there is such an air of romance about players, and that it is pleasanter to see them, even in their own persons, than any of the three learned professions. We feel more respect for John Kemble in a plain coat than for the Lord Chancellor on the woolsack. He is surrounded, to our eyes, with a greater number of imposing recollections; he is a more reverend piece of formality—a more complicated tissue of costume. We do not know whether to look upon this accomplished actor as Pierre, or King John, or Coriolanus, or Cato, or Leontes, or the Stranger. But we see in him a stately hieroglyphic of humanity, a living monument of departed greatness, a sombre comment on the rise and fall of kings. We look after him till he is out of sight as we listen to a story of one of Ossian's heroes, to "a tale of other times!" . . . .

The most pleasant feature in the profession of a player, and which indeed is peculiar to it, is, that we not only admire the talents of those who adorn it, but we contract a personal intimacy with them.

There is no class of society whom so many persons regard with affection as actors. We greet them on the stage; we like to meet them in the streets; they almost always recall to us pleasant associations; and we feel our gratitude excited without the uneasiness of a sense of obligation. The very gaiety and popularity, however, which surround the life of a favourite performer make the retiring from it a very serious business. It glances a mortifying reflection on the shortness of human life and the vanity of human pleasures. Something reminds us that "all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players."

[*Characters of Shakspeare's Plays*, 1817. *Five Editions of this work have appeared in England, and more than one in the United States.*]

MACBETH.

"The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name."

[*Midsummer Night's Dream*, v. 1.]

"MACBETH" and "Lear," "Othello" and "Hamlet," are usually reckoned Shakspeare's four principal tragedies. "Lear" stands first for the profound intensity of the passion; "Macbeth" for the wildness of the imagination and the rapidity of the action; "Othello" for the progressive interest and powerful alternations of feeling; "Hamlet" for the refined development of thought and sentiment. If the force of genius shown in each of these works is astonishing, their variety is not less so. They are like different creations of the same mind, not one of which has the slightest reference to the rest. This distinctness and originality is indeed the necessary consequence of truth and nature. Shakspeare's genius alone appeared to possess the resources of nature. He is "your only *tragedy-maker*." His plays have the force of things upon the mind. What he represents is brought home to the bosom as a part of our experience, implanted in the memory as if we had known the places, persons, and things of which he treats. "Macbeth" is like a record of a preternatural and tragical event. It has the rugged severity of an old chronicle with all that the imagination of the poet can engraft upon traditional belief. The castle of Macbeth, round which "the air smells wooingly," and where "the temple-haunting martlet builds," has a real subsistence in the mind; the Weird Sisters meet us in person on "the blasted heath;" the "air-drawn dagger" moves slowly before our

eyes; the "gracious Duncan," the "blood-boltered Banquo," stand before us: all that passed through the mind of Macbeth passes without the loss of a tittle, through ours. All that could actually take place, and all that is only possible to be conceived, what was said and what was done, the workings of passion, the spells of magic, are brought before us with the same absolute truth and vividness. Shakspeare excelled in the openings of his plays: that of "Macbeth" is the most striking of any. The wildness of the scenery, the sudden shifting of the situations and characters, the bustle, the expectations excited, are equally extraordinary. From the first entrance of the Witches and the description of them when they meet Macbeth,

> ———"What are these
> So wither'd, and so wild in their attire,
> That look not like th' inhabitants o' th' earth
> And yet are on't?"

the mind is prepared for all that follows.

This tragedy is alike distinguished for the lofty imagination it displays, and for the tumultuous vehemence of the action; and the one is made the moving principle of the other. The overwhelming pressure of preternatural agency urges on the tide of human passion with redoubled force. Macbeth himself appears driven along by the violence of his fate like a vessel drifting before a storm: he reels to and fro like a drunken man; he staggers under the weight of his own purposes and the suggestions of others; he stands at bay with his situation; and from the superstitious awe and breathless suspense into which the communications of the Weird Sisters throw him, is hurried on with daring impatience to verify their predictions, and with impious and bloody hand to tear aside the veil which hides the uncertainty of the future. He is not equal to the struggle with fate and conscience. He now "bends up each corporal agent to this terrible feat;" at other times his heart misgives him, and he is cowed and abashed by his success. "The attempt, and not the deed, confounds us." His mind is assailed by the stings of remorse, and full of "preternatural solicitings." His speeches and soliloquies are dark riddles on human life, baffling solution, and entangling him in their labyrinths. In thought he is absent and perplexed, sudden and desperate in act, from a distrust of his own resolution. His energy springs from the anxiety and agitation of his mind. His blindly rushing forward on the objects of his ambition and revenge, or his recoiling from them, equally betrays the harassed state of his feelings. This part of his character is admirably set off by being brought in connection with that of Lady Macbeth, whose obdurate

strength of will and masculine firmness give her the ascendency over her husband's faltering virtue. She at once seizes on the opportunity that offers for the accomplishment of all their wished-for greatness, and never flinches from her object till all is over. The magnitude of her resolution almost covers the magnitude of her guilt. She is a great bad woman, whom we hate, but whom we fear more than we hate. She does not excite our loathing and abhorrence like Regan and Goneril. She is only wicked to gain a great end, and is perhaps more distinguished by her commanding presence of mind and inexorable self-will, which do not suffer her to be diverted from a bad purpose, when once formed, by weak and womanly regrets, than by the hardness of her heart or want of natural affections. The impression which her lofty determination of character makes on the mind of Macbeth is well described where he exclaims,

> ———"Bring forth men-children only;
> For thy undaunted mettle should compose
> Nothing but males!"

Nor do the pains she is at to "screw his courage to the sticking-place," the reproach to him, not to be "lost so poorly in himself," the assurance that "a little water clears them of this deed," show anything but her greater consistency in depravity. Her strong-nerved ambition furnishes ribs of steel to the "sides of his intent;" and she is herself wound up to the execution of her baneful project with the same unshrinking fortitude in crime, that in other circumstances she would probably have shown patience in suffering. The deliberate sacrifice of all other considerations to the gaining "for their future days and nights sole sovereign sway and masterdom," by the murder of Duncan, is gorgeously expressed in her invocation on hearing of "his fatal entrance under her battlements:"—

> ———"Come, you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here:
> And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full
> Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood,
> Stop up th' access and passage to remorse,
> That no compunctious visitings of nature
> Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
> Th' effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts,
> And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,
> Wherever in your sightless substances
> You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night!
> And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,

That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor heav'n peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry, Hold, hold!—"

When she first hears that "the king [Duncan] comes here to-night," she is so overcome by the news, which is beyond her utmost expectations, that she answers the messenger, "Thou'rt mad to say it:" and on receiving her husband's account of the predictions of the Witches, conscious of his instability of purpose, and that her presence is necessary to goad him on to the consummation of his promised greatness, she exclaims—

———"Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,
And chastise with the valour of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round,
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
To have thee crown'd withal."

This swelling exultation and keen spirit of triumph, this uncontrollable eagerness of anticipation, which seems to dilate her form and take possession of all her faculties, this solid, substantial flesh-and-blood display of passion, exhibit a striking contrast to the cold, abstracted, gratuitous, servile malignity of the Witches, who are equally instrumental in urging Macbeth to his fate for the mere love of mischief, and from a disinterested delight in deformity and cruelty. They are hags of mischief, obscene panders to iniquity, malicious from their impotence of enjoyment, enamoured of destruction, because they are themselves unreal, abortive, half-existences: who become sublime from their exemption from all human sympathies and contempt for all human affairs, as Lady Macbeth does by the force of passion! Her fault seems to have been an excess of that strong principle of self-interest and family aggrandisement, not amenable to the common feelings of compassion and justice, which is so marked a feature in barbarous nations and times. A passing reflection of this kind, on the resemblance of the sleeping king to her father, alone prevents her from slaying Duncan with her own hand.

In speaking of the character of Lady Macbeth, we ought not to pass over Mrs. Siddons's manner of acting that part. We can conceive of nothing grander. It was something above nature. It seemed almost as if a being of a superior order had dropped from a higher sphere to awe the world with the majesty of her appearance. Power was seated on her brow, passion emanated from her breast as from a shrine; she was tragedy personified. In coming on in the sleeping-scene, her eyes were open, but their sense was shut. She

was like a person bewildered and unconscious of what she did. Her lips moved involuntarily: all her gestures were involuntary and mechanical. She glided on and off the stage like an apparition To have seen her in that character was an event in every one's life, not to be forgotten.

OTHELLO.

It has been said that tragedy purifies the affections by terror and pity. That is, it substitutes imaginary sympathy for mere selfishness. It gives us a high and permanent interest, beyond ourselves, in humanity as such. It raises the great, the remote, and the possible to an equality with the real, the little, and the near. It makes man a partaker with his kind. It subdues and softens the stubbornness of his will. It teaches him that there are and have been others like himself, by showing him as in a glass what they have felt, thought, and done. It opens the chambers of the human heart. It leaves nothing indifferent to us that can affect our common nature. It excites our sensibility by exhibiting the passions wound up to the utmost pitch by the power of imagination or the temptation of circumstances; and corrects their fatal excesses in ourselves by pointing to the greater extent of sufferings and of crimes to which they have led others. Tragedy creates a balance of the affections. It makes us thoughtful spectators in the lists of life. It is the refiner of the species; a discipline of humanity. The habitual study of poetry and works of imagination is one chief part of a well-grounded education. A taste for liberal art is necessary to complete the character of a gentleman. Science alone is hard and mechanical. It exercises the understanding upon things out of ourselves, while it leaves the affections unemployed, or engrossed with our own immediate, narrow interests.—"Othello" furnishes an illustration of these remarks. It excites our sympathy in an extraordinary degree. The moral it conveys has a closer application to the concerns of human life than that of almost any other of Shakspeare's plays. "It comes directly home to the bosoms and business of men." The pathos in "Lear" is indeed more dreadful and overpowering; but it is less natural, and less of every day's occurrence. We have not the same degree of sympathy with the passions described in "Macbeth." The interest in "Hamlet" is more remote and reflex. That of "Othello" is at once equally profound and affecting.

The picturesque contrasts of character in this play are almost as remarkable as the depth of the passion. The Moor Othello, the gentle Desdemona, the villain Iago, the good-natured Cassio, the

fool Roderigo, present a range and variety of character as striking and palatable as that produced by the opposition of costume in a picture. Their distinguishing qualities stand out to the mind's eye, so that even when we are not thinking of their actions or sentiments, the idea of their persons is still as present to us as ever. These characters and the images they stamp upon the mind are the farthest asunder possible, the distance between them is immense; yet the compass of knowledge and invention which the poet has shown in embodying these extreme creations of his genius is only greater than the truth and felicity with which he has identified each character with itself, or blended their different qualities together in the same story. What a contrast the character of Othello forms to that of Iago! At the same time, the force of conception with which these two figures are opposed to each other is rendered still more intense by the complete consistency with which the traits of each character are brought out in a state of the highest finishing. The making one black and the other white, the one unprincipled, the other unfortunate in the extreme, would have answered the common purposes of effect, and satisfied the ambition of an ordinary painter of character. Shakspeare has laboured the finer shades of difference in both with as much care and skill as if he had had to depend on the execution alone for the success of his design. On the other hand, Desdemona and Æmilia are not meant to be opposed with anything like strong contrast to each other. Both are, to outward appearance, characters of common life, not more distinguished than women usually are, by difference of rank and situation. The difference of their thoughts and sentiments is, however, laid open, their minds are separated from each other by signs as plain and as little to be mistaken as the complexions of their husbands.

The movement of the passion in Othello is exceedingly different from that of Macbeth. In Macbeth there is a violent struggle between opposite feelings, between ambition and the stings of conscience, almost from first to last: in Othello, the doubtful conflict between contrary passions, though dreadful, continues only for a short time, and the chief interest is excited by the alternate ascendency of different passions, by the entire and unforeseen change from the fondest love and most unbounded confidence to the tortures of jealousy and the madness of hatred. The revenge of Othello, after it has once taken thorough possession of his mind, never quits it, but grows stronger and stronger at every moment of its delay. The nature of the Moor is noble, confiding, tender, and generous; but his blood is of the most inflammable kind; and being once roused by a sense of his wrongs,

he is stopped by no considerations of remorse or pity till he has given a loose to all the dictates of his rage and his despair. It is in working his noble nature up to this extremity through rapid but gradual transitions, in raising passion to its height from the smallest beginnings and in spite of all obstacles, in painting the expiring conflict between love and hatred, tenderness and resentment, jealousy and remorse, in unfolding the strength and the weakness of our nature, in uniting sublimity of thought with the anguish of the keenest woe, in putting in motion the various impulses that agitate this our mortal being, and at last blending them in that noble tide of deep and sustained passion, impetuous but majestic, that "flows on to the Propontic, and knows no ebb," that Shakspeare has shown the mastery of his genius and of his power over the human heart. The third act of "Othello" is his finest display, not of knowledge or passion separately, but of the two combined, of the knowledge of character with the expression of passion, of consummate art in the keeping up of appearances with the profound workings of nature, and the convulsive movements of uncontrollable agony, of the power of inflicting torture and of suffering it. Not only is the tumult of passion in Othello's mind heaved up from the very bottom of the soul, but every the slightest undulation of feeling is seen on the surface, as it arises from the impulses of imagination or the malicious suggestions of Iago. The progressive preparation for the catastrophe is wonderfully managed from the Moor's first gallant recital of the story of his love, of "the spells and witchcraft he had used," from his unlooked-for and romantic success, the fond satisfaction with which he dotes on his own happiness, the unreserved tenderness of Desdemona and her innocent importunities in favour of Cassio, irritating the suspicions instilled into her husband's mind by the perfidy of Iago, and rankling there to poison, till he loses all command of himself, and his rage can only be appeased by blood.

HAMLET.

This is that Hamlet the Dane whom we read of in our youth, and whom we may be said almost to remember in our after-years; he who made that famous soliloquy on life, who gave the advice to the players, who thought "this goodly frame, the earth," a sterile promontory, and "this brave o'erhanging firmament, the air, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire," "a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours;" whom "man delighted not, nor woman neither;" he who talked with the gravediggers, and moralised on

Yorick's skull; the schoolfellow of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern at Wittenberg; the friend of Horatio; the lover of Ophelia; he that was mad and sent to England; the slow avenger of his father's death; who lived at the court of Horwendillus five hundred years before we were born, but all whose thoughts we seem to know as well as we do our own, because we have read them in Shakspeare.

Hamlet is a name; his speeches and sayings but the idle coinage of the poet's brain. What then, are they not real? They are as real as our own thoughts. Their reality is in the reader's mind It is *we* who are Hamlet. This play has a prophetic truth, which is above that of history. Whoever has become thoughtful and melancholy through his own mishaps or those of others; whoever has borne about with him the clouded brow of reflection, and thought himself "too much i' th' sun;" whoever has seen the golden lamp of day dimmed by envious mists rising in his own breast, and could find in the world before him only a dull blank with nothing left remarkable in it; whoever has known "the pangs of despised love, the insolence of office, or the spurns which patient merit of the unworthy takes;" he who has felt his mind sink within him, and sadness cling to his heart like a malady, who has had his hopes blighted and his youth staggered by the apparitions of strange things; who cannot be well at ease, while he sees evil hovering near him like a spectre; whose powers of action have been eaten up by thought, he to whom the universe seems infinite, and himself nothing; whose bitterness of soul makes him careless of consequences, and who goes to a play as his best resource to shove off, to a second remove, the evils of life by a mock representation of them—this is the true Hamlet.

We have been so used to this tragedy that we hardly know how to criticise it any more than we should know how to describe our own faces. But we must make such observations as we can. It is the one of Shakspeare's plays that we think of the oftenest, because it abounds most in striking reflections on human life, and because the distresses of Hamlet are transferred, by the turn of his mind, to the general account of humanity. Whatever happens to him we apply to ourselves, because he applies it so himself as a means of general reasoning. He is a great moraliser; and what makes him worth attending to is, that he moralises on his own feelings and experience. He is not a commonplace pedant. If "Lear" is distinguished by the greatest depth of passion, "Hamlet" is the most remarkable for the ingenuity, originality, and unstudied development of character. Shakspeare had more magnanimity than any other poet, and he has shown more of it in this play than in

any other. There is no attempt to force an interest: everything is left for time and circumstances to unfold. The attention is excited without effort, the incidents succeed each other as matters of course, the characters think and speak and act just as they might do if left entirely to themselves. There is no set purpose, no straining at a point. The observations are suggested by the passing scene—the gusts of passion come and go like sounds of music borne on the wind. The whole play is an exact transcript of what might be supposed to have taken place at the court of Denmark, at the remote period of time fixed upon, before the modern refinements in morals and manners were heard of. It would have been interesting enough to have been admitted as a bystander in such a scene, at such a time, to have heard and witnessed something of what was going on. But here we are more than spectators. We have not only "the outward pageants and the signs of grief;" but "we have that within which passes show." We read the thoughts of the heart, we catch the passions living as they rise. Other dramatic writers give us very fine versions and paraphrases of nature; but Shakspeare, together with his own comments, gives us the original text, that we may judge for ourselves. This is a very great advantage.

The character of Hamlet stands quite by itself. It is not a character marked by strength of will or even of passion, but by refinement of thought and sentiment. Hamlet is as little of the hero as a man can well be; but he is a young and princely novice, full of high enthusiasm and quick sensibility—the sport of circumstances, questioning with fortune and refining on his own feelings, and forced from the natural bias of his disposition by the strangeness of his situation. He seems incapable of deliberate action, and is only hurried into extremities on the spur of the occasion, when he has no time to reflect, as in the scene where he kills Polonius, and again, where he alters the letters which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are taking with them to England, purporting his death. At other times, when he is most bound to act, he remains puzzled, undecided, and sceptical, dallies with his purposes, till the occasion is lost, and finds out some pretence to relapse into indolence and thoughtfulness again. For this reason he refuses to kill the King when he is at his prayers, and by a refinement in malice, which is in truth only an excuse for his own want of resolution, defers his revenge to a more fatal opportunity, when he shall be engaged in some act "that has no relish of salvation in it."

He is the prince of philosophical speculators; and because he cannot have his revenge perfect, according to the most refined idea

his wish can form, he declines it altogether. So he scrupies to trust the suggestions of the Ghost, contrives the scene of the play to have surer proof of his uncle's guilt, and then rests satisfied with this confirmation of his suspicions, and the success of his experiment, instead of acting upon it. Yet he is sensible of his own weakness, taxes himself with it, and tries to reason himself out of it. Still he does nothing; and this very speculation on his own infirmity only affords him another occasion for indulging it. It is not from any want of attachment to his father or of abhorrence of his murder that Hamlet is thus dilatory; but it is more to his taste to indulge his imagination in reflecting upon the enormity of the crime and refining on his schemes of vengeance, than to put them into immediate practice. His ruling passion is to think, not to act; and any vague pretext that flatters this propensity instantly diverts him from his previous purposes.

The moral perfection of this character has been called in question, we think, by those who did not understand it. It is more interesting than according to rules; amiable, though not faultless. The ethical delineations of "that noble and liberal casuist" (as Shakspeare has been well called) do not exhibit the drab-coloured quakerism of morality. His plays are not copied either from the "Whole Duty of Man" or from "The Academy of Compliments!" We confess we are a little shocked at the want of refinement in those who are shocked at the want of refinement in Hamlet. The neglect of punctilious exactness in his behaviour either partakes of the "licence of the time," or else belongs to the very excess of intellectual refinement in the character, which makes the common rules of life, as well as his own purposes, sit loose upon him. He may be said to be amenable only to the tribunal of his own thoughts, and is too much taken up with the airy world of contemplation to lay as much stress as he ought on the practical consequences of things. His habitual principles of action are unhinged and out of joint with the time. His conduct to Ophelia is quite natural in his circumstances. It is that of assumed severity only. It is the effect of disappointed hope, of bitter regrets, of affection suspended, not obliterated, by the distractions of the scene around him! Amidst the natural and preternatural horrors of his situation, he might be excused in delicacy from carrying on a regular courtship. When "his father's spirit was in arms," it was not a time for the son to make love in. He could neither marry Ophelia, nor wound her mind by explaining the cause of his alienation, which he durst hardly trust himself to think of. It would have taken him years to have come to a direct explanation on the point. In the harassed

state of his mind, he could not have done much otherwise than he did. His conduct does not contradict what he says when he sees her funeral:

> "I loved Ophelia: forty thousand brothers
> Could not with all their quantity of love
> Make up my sum."

Nothing can be more affecting or beautiful than the Queen's apostrophe to Ophelia on throwing the flowers into the grave:

> "Sweets to the sweet, farewell. [*Scattering flowers.*
> I hop'd thou should'st have been my Hamlet's wife;
> I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,
> And not have strew'd thy grave."

Shakspeare was thoroughly a master of the mixed motives of human character, and he here shows us the Queen, who was so criminal in some respects, not without sensibility and affection in other relations of life.—Ophelia is a character almost too exquisitely touching to be dwelt upon. Oh rose of May, oh flower too soon faded! Her love, her madness, her death, are described with the truest touches of tenderness and pathos. It is a character which nobody but Shakspeare could have drawn in the way that he has done, and to the conception of which there is not even the smallest approach, except in some of the old romantic ballads.

ROMEO AND JULIET.

"Romeo and Juliet" is the only tragedy which Shakspeare has written entirely on a love-story. It is supposed to have been his first play, and it deserves to stand in that proud rank. There is the buoyant spirit of youth in every line, in the rapturous intoxication of hope, and in the bitterness of despair. It has been said of "Romeo and Juliet" by a great critic, that "whatever is most intoxicating in the odour of a southern spring, languishing in the song of the nightingale, or voluptuous in the first opening of the rose, is to be found in this poem." The description is true; and yet it does not answer to our idea of the play. For if it has the sweetness of the rose, it has its freshness too; if it has the languor of the nightingale's song, it has also its giddy transport; if it has the softness of a southern spring, it is as glowing and as bright. There is nothing of a sickly and sentimental cast. Romeo and Juliet are in love, but they are not love-sick. Everything speaks the very soul of pleasure, the high and healthy pulse of the passions: the heart beats, the blood circulates and mantles throughout. Their courtship

is not an insipid interchange of sentiments lip-deep, learnt at second-hand from poems and plays,—made up of beauties of the most shadowy kind, of "fancies wan that hang the pensive head," of evanescent smiles, and sighs that breathe not, of delicacy that shrinks from the touch, and feebleness that scarce supports itself, an elaborate vacuity of thought, and an artificial dearth of sense, spirit, truth, and nature! It is the reverse of all this. It is Shakspeare all over, and Shakspeare when he was young.

We have heard it objected to "Romeo and Juliet," that it is founded on an idle passion between a boy and a girl, who have scarcely seen and can have but little sympathy or rational esteem for one another, who have had no experience of the good or ills of life, and whose raptures or despair must be therefore equally groundless and fantastical. Whoever objects to the youth of the parties in this play as "too unripe and crude" to pluck the sweets of love, and wishes to see a first-love carried on into a good old age, and the passions taken at the rebound, when their force is spent, may find all this done in "The Stranger" and in other German plays, where they do things by contraries, and transpose nature to inspire sentiment and create philosophy. Shakspeare proceeded in a more straightforward and, we think, effectual way. He did not endeavour to extract beauty from wrinkles, or the wild throb of passion from the last expiring sigh of indifference. He did not "gather grapes of thorns nor figs of thistles." It was not his way. But he has given a picture of human life, such as it is in the order of nature. He has founded the passion of the two lovers not on the pleasures they had experienced, but on all the pleasures they had *not* experienced. All that was to come of life was theirs. At that untried source of promised happiness they slaked their thirst, and the first eager draught made them drunk with love and joy. They were in full possession of their senses and their affections. Their hopes were of air, their desires of fire. Youth is the season of love, because the heart is then first melted in tenderness from the touch of novelty, and kindled to rapture, for it knows no end of its enjoyments or its wishes. Desire has no limit but itself. Passion, the love and expectation of pleasure, is infinite, extravagant, inexhaustible, till experience comes to check and kill it. Juliet exclaims on her first interview with Romeo:

> "My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
> My love as deep."

And why should it not? What was to hinder the thrilling tide of pleasure, which had just gushed from her heart, from flowing on

without stint or measure but experience, which she was yet without? What was to abate the transport of the first sweet sense of pleasure, which her heart and her senses had just tasted, but indifference which she was yet a stranger to? What was there to check the ardour of hope, of faith, of constancy, just rising in her breast, but disappointment which she had not yet felt? As are the desires and the hopes of youthful passion, such is the keenness of its disappointments, and their baleful effect. Such is the transition in this play from the highest bliss to the lowest despair, from the nuptial couch to an untimely grave. The only evil that even in apprehension befalls the two lovers is the loss of the greatest possible felicity; yet this loss is fatal to both, for they had rather part with life than bear the thought of surviving all that had made life dear to them. In all this, Shakspeare has but followed nature, which existed in his time, as well as now. The modern philosophy, which reduces the whole theory of the mind to habitual impressions, and leaves the natural impulses of passion and imagination out of the account, had not then been discovered; or if it had, would have been little calculated for the uses of poetry.

LEAR.

We wish that we could pass this play over, and say nothing about it. All that we can say must fall far short of the subject; or even of what we ourselves conceive of it. To attempt to give a description of the play itself or of its effect upon the mind, is mere impertinence: yet we must say something. It is, then, the best of all Shakspeare's plays, for it is the one in which he was the most in earnest. He was here fairly caught in the web of his own imagination. The passion which he has taken as his subject is that which strikes its root deepest into the human heart; of which the bond is the hardest to be unloosed; and the cancelling and tearing to pieces of which gives the greatest revulsion to the frame. This depth of nature, this force of passion, this tug and war of the elements of our being, this firm faith in filial piety, and the giddy anarchy and whirling tumult of the thoughts at finding this prop failing it, the contrast between the fixed, immovable basis of natural affection and the rapid, irregular starts of imagination, suddenly wrenched from all its accustomed holds and resting-places in the soul, this is what Shakspeare has given, and what nobody else but he could give. So we believe. The mind of Lear, staggering between the weight of attachment and the hurried movements of passion, is like a tall ship driven about by the winds, buffeted by the furious waves, but

that still rides above the storm, having its anchor fixed in the bottom of the sea; or it is like the sharp rock circled by the eddying whirlpool that foams and beats against it, or like the solid promontory pushed from its basis by the force of an earthquake.

The character of Lear itself is very finely conceived for the purpose. It is the only ground on which such a story could be built with the greatest truth and effect. It is his rash haste, his violent impetuosity, his blindness to everything but the dictates of his passions or affections, that produces all his misfortunes, that aggravates his impatience of them, that enforces our pity for him. The part which Cordelia bears in the scene is extremely beautiful: the story is almost told in the first words she utters. We see at once the precipice on which the poor old king stands from his own extravagant and credulous importunity, the indiscreet simplicity of her love (which, to be sure, has a little of her father's obstinacy in it), and the hollowness of her sisters' pretensions. Almost the first burst of that noble tide of passion which runs through the play is in the remonstrance of Kent to his royal master on the injustice of his sentence against his youngest daughter: "Be Kent unmannerly, when Lear is mad!" This manly plainness, which draws down on him the displeasure of the unadvised king, is worthy of the fidelity with which he adheres to his fallen fortunes. The true character of the two eldest daughters, Regan and Goneril (they are so thoroughly hateful that we do not even like to repeat their names), breaks out in their answer to Cordelia, who desires them to treat their father well: "Prescribe not us our duties"—their hatred of advice being in proportion to their determination to do wrong, and to their hypocritical pretensions to do right. Their deliberate hypocrisy adds the last finishing to the odiousness of their characters.

It has been said, and we think justly, that the third act of "Othello" and the three first acts of "Lear" are Shakspeare's great masterpieces in the logic of passion: that they contain the highest examples not only of the force of individual passion, but of its dramatic vicissitudes and striking effects arising from the different circumstances and characters of the persons speaking. We see the ebb and flow of the feeling, its pauses and feverish starts, its impatience of opposition, its accumulating force when it has time to recollect itself, the manner in which it avails itself of every passing word or gesture, its haste to repel insinuation, the alternate contraction and dilatation of the soul, and all "the dazzling fence of controversy" in this mortal combat with poisoned weapons, aimed at the heart, where each wound is fatal. We have seen in "Othello" how the unsuspecting frankness and impetuous passions of the Moor

are played upon and exasperated by the artful dexterity of Iago. In the present play, that which aggravates the sense of sympathy in the reader, and of uncontrollable anguish in the swollen heart of Lear, is the petrifying indifference, the cold, calculating, obdurate selfishness of his daughters. His keen passions seem whetted on their stony hearts. The contrast would be too painful, the shock too great, but for the intervention of the Fool, whose well-timed levity comes in to break the continuity of feeling when it can no longer be borne, and to bring into play again the fibres of the heart just as they are growing rigid from overstrained excitement. The imagination is glad to take refuge in the half-comic, half-serious comments of the Fool, just as the mind under the extreme anguish of a surgical operation vents itself in sallies of wit. The character was also a grotesque ornament of the barbarous times, in which alone the tragic groundwork of the story could be laid. In another point of view it is indispensable, inasmuch as, while it is a diversion to the too great intensity of our disgust, it carries the pathos to the highest pitch of which it is capable, by showing the pitiable weakness of the old king's conduct and its irretrievable consequences in the most familiar point of view. Lear may well "beat at the gate which let his folly in," after, as the Fool says, "he has made his daughters his mothers." The character is dropped in the third act to make room for the entrance of Edgar as Mad Tom, which well accords with the increasing bustle and wildness of the incidents; and nothing can be more complete than the distinction between Lear's real and Edgar's assumed madness, while the resemblance in the cause of their distresses, from the severing of the nearest ties of natural affection, keeps up a unity of interest. Shakspeare's mastery over his subject, if it was not art, was owing to a knowledge of the connecting-links of the passions, and their effect upon the mind, still more wonderful than any systematic adherence to rules, and that anticipated and outdid all the efforts of the most refined art, not inspired and rendered instinctive by genius. . . .

When Lear dies, indeed, we feel the truth of what Kent says on the occasion—

> "Vex not his ghost: O let him pass! he hates him,
> That would upon the rack of this tough world
> Stretch him out longer."

Yet a happy ending has been contrived for this play, which is approved of by Dr. Johnson and condemned by Schlegel. A better authority than either on any subject in which poetry and feeling are

concerned—Mr. Charles Lamb—has given it in favour of Shakspeare, in some remarks on the acting of Lear, with which we shall conclude this account:—

"The 'Lear' of Shakspeare cannot be acted. The contemptible machinery with which they mimic the storm which he goes out in, is not more inadequate to represent the horrors of the real elements than any actor can be to represent Lear. The greatness of Lear is not in corporal dimension, but in intellectual; the explosions of his passions are terrible as a volcano: they are storms turning up and disclosing to the bottom that rich sea, his mind, with all its vast riches. It is his mind which is laid bare. This case of flesh and blood seems too insignificant to be thought on; even as he himself neglects it. On the stage we see nothing but corporal infirmities and weakness, the impotence of rage; while we read it we see not Lear, but we are Lear;—we are in his mind: we are sustained by a grandeur which baffles the malice of daughters and storms; in the aberrations of his reason we discover a mighty, irregular power of reasoning, immethodised from the ordinary purposes of life, but exerting its powers, as the wind blows where it listeth, at will on the corruptions and abuses of mankind. What have looks or tones to do with that sublime identification of his age with that of *the heavens themselves*, when in his reproaches to them for conniving at the injustice of his children he reminds them that 'they themselves are old'? What gesture shall we appropriate to this? What has the voice or the eye to do with such things? But the play is beyond all art, as the tamperings with it show: it is too hard and stony: it must have love-scenes, and a happy ending. It is not enough that Cordelia is a daughter, she must shine as a lover too. Tate has put his hook in the nostrils of this Leviathan, for Garrick and his followers, the showmen of the scene, to draw it about more easily. A happy ending!—as if the living martyrdom that Lear had gone through,—the flaying of his feelings alive, did not make a fair dismissal from the stage of life the only decorous thing for him. If he is to live and be happy after, if he could sustain this world's burden after, why all this pudder and preparation—why torment us with all this unnecessary sympathy? As if the childish pleasure of getting his gilt robes and sceptre again could tempt him to act over again his misused station,—as if at his years and with his experience, anything was left but to die."

FALSTAFF.

If Shakspeare's fondness for the ludierous sometimes led to faults in his tragedies (whieh was not often the case), he has made us amends by the charaeter of Falstaff. This is perhaps the most substantial comic eharaeter that ever was inveuted. Sir John earries a most portly presence in the mind's eye; and in him, not to speak it profanely, "we behold the fulness of the spirit of wit and humour bodily." We are as well aequainted with his person as his mind, and his jokes eome upon us with double foree and relish from the quantity of flesh through whieh they make their way, as he shakes his fat sides with laughter, or "lards the lean earth as he walks along." Other eomie eharaeters seem, if we approach and handle them, to resolve themselves into air, "into thin air;" but this is embodied and palpable to the grossest apprehension: it lies "three fingers deep upon the ribs," it plays about the lungs and diaphragm with all the foree of animal enjoyment. His body is like a good estate to his mind, from which he reeeives rents and revenues of profit and pleasure in kind, according to its extent and the richness of the soil. Wit is often a meagre substitute for pleasurable sensation; an effusion of spleen and petty spite at the eomforts of others, from feeling none in itself. Falstaff's wit is an emanation of a fine eonstitution; an exuberanee of good-humour and good-nature; an overflowing of his love of laughter and good-fellowship; a giving vent to his heart's ease, and over-contentment with himself and others. He would not be in eharaeter if he were not so fat as he is; for there is the greatest keeping in the boundless luxury of his imagination and the pampered self-indulgenee of his physieal appetites. He manures and nourishes his mind with jests, as he does his body with sack and sugar. He earves out his jokes as he would a eapon or a hauneh of venison, where there is *cut and come again*, and pours out upon them the oil of gladness. His tongue drops fatness, and in the chambers of his brain "it snows of meat and drink." He keeps up perpetual holiday and open house, and we live with him in a round of invitations to a rump and dozen. Yet we are not to suppose that he was a mere sensualist. All this is as mueh in imagination as in reality. His sensuality does not engross and stupefy his other faculties, but "aseends me into the brain, dries me there all the foolish and dull and crudy vapours which environ it, makes it apprehensive, quick, forgetive, full of nimble, fiery, and deleetable shapes." His imagination keeps up the ball after his senses have done with it. He seems to have

even a greater enjoyment of the freedom from restraint, of good cheer, of his ease, of his vanity, in the ideal exaggerated description which he gives of them, than in fact. He never fails to enrich his discourse with allusions to eating and drinking, but we never see him at table. He carries his own larder about with him, and he is himself "a tun of man." His pulling out the bottle in the field of battle is a joke to show his contempt for glory accompanied with danger, his systematic adherence to his Epicurean philosophy in the most trying circumstances. Again, such is his deliberate exaggeration of his own vices, that it does not seem quite certain whether the account of his hostess's bill, found in his pocket, with such an out-of-the-way charge for capons and sack with only one halfpenny-worth of bread, was not put there by himself as a trick to humour the jest upon his favourite propensities, and as a conscious caricature of himself. He is represented as a liar, a braggart, a coward, a glutton, &c., and yet we are not offended but delighted with him; for he is all these as much to amuse others as to gratify himself. He openly assumes all these characters to show the humorous part of them. The unrestrained indulgence of his own ease, appetites, and convenience has neither malice nor hypocrisy in it. In a word, he is an actor in himself almost as much as upon the stage, and we no more object to the character of Falstaff in a moral point of view than we should think of bringing an excellent comedian, who should represent him to the life, before one of the police-offices. We only consider the number of pleasant lights in which he puts certain foibles (the more pleasant as they are opposed to the received rules and necessary restraints of society), and do not trouble ourselves about the consequences resulting from them, for no mischievous consequences do result. Sir John is old as well as fat, which gives a melancholy retrospective tinge to the character; and by the disparity between his inclinations and his capacity for enjoyment, makes it still more ludicrous and fantastical.

The secret of Falstaff's wit is for the most part a masterly presence of mind, an absolute self-possession, which nothing can disturb. His repartees are involuntary suggestions of his self-love; instinctive evasions of everything that threatens to interrupt the career of his triumphant jollity and self-complacency. His very size floats him out of all his difficulties in a sea of rich conceits; and he turns round on the pivot of his convenience, with every occasion and at a moment's warning. His natural repugnance to every unpleasant thought or circumstance, of itself makes light of objections, and provokes the most extravagant and licentious answers in his own justification. His indifference to truth puts no check upon his

invention, and the more improbable and unexpected his contrivances are, the more happily does he seem to be delivered of them, the anticipation of their effect acting as a stimulus to the gaiety of his fancy. The success of one adventurous sally gives him spirits to undertake another: he deals always in round numbers, and his exaggerations and excuses are "open, palpable, monstrous as the father that begets them."

[*A View of the English Stage; or a Series of Dramatic Criticisms*, 1818.]

THE ACTING OF KEAN.

. . . I WENT to see him the first night of his appearing in Shylock. I remember it well. The boxes were empty, and the pit not half-full: "some quantity of barren spectators and idle renters were thinly scattered to make up a show." The whole presented a dreary, hopeless aspect. I was in considerable apprehension for the result. From the first scene in which Mr. Kean came on my doubts were at an end. I had been told to give as favourable an account as I could: I gave a true one. I am not one of those who, when they see the sun breaking from behind a cloud, stop to ask others whether it is the moon. Mr. Kean's appearance was the first gleam of genius breaking athwart the gloom of the Stage, and the public have since gladly basked in its ray, in spite of actors, managers, and critics. . . .

Mr. Kean (of whom report had spoken highly) last night[1] made his appearance at Drury Lane Theatre in the character of Shylock. For voice, eye, action, and expression no actor has come out for many years at all equal to him. The applause, from the first scene to the last, was general, loud, and uninterrupted. Indeed, the very first scene in which he comes on with Bassanio and Antonio showed the master in his art, and at once decided the opinion of the audience. Perhaps it was the most perfect of any. Notwithstanding the complete success of Mr. Kean in the part of Shylock we question whether he will not become a greater favourite in other parts. There was a lightness and vigour in his tread, a buoyancy and elasticity of spirit, a fire and animation, which would accord better with almost any other character than with the morose, sullen, inward, inveterate, inflexible malignity of Shylock. The character of Shylock is that of a man brooding over one idea, that

[1] January 26, 1814.

of its wrongs, and bent on one unalterable purpose, that of revenge. In conveying a profound impression of this feeling, or in embodying the general conception of rigid and uncontrollable self-will, equally proof against every sentiment of humanity or prejudice of opinion, we have seen actors more successful than Mr. Kean; but in giving effect to the conflict of passions arising out of the contrasts of situation, in varied vehemence of declamation, in keenness of sarcasm, in the rapidity of his transitions from one tone and feeling to another, in propriety and novelty of action, presenting a succession of striking pictures, and giving perpetually fresh shocks of delight and surprise, it would be difficult to single out a competitor. The fault of his acting was (if we may hazard the objection) an over-display of the resources of the art, which gave too much relief to the hard, impenetrable, dark groundwork of the character of Shylock. It would be endless to point out individual beauties, where almost every passage was received with equal and deserved applause. We thought, in one or two instances, the pauses in the voice were too long, and too great a reliance placed on the expression of the countenance, which is a language intelligible only to a part of the house. . . .

. . . Mr. Kean's Othello is his best character, and the highest effort of genius on the stage. We say this without any exception or reserve. Yet we wish it was better than it is. In parts, we think he rises as high as human genius can go: at other times, though powerful, the whole effort is thrown away in a wrong direction, and disturbs our idea of the character. There are some technical objections. Othello was tall; but that is nothing: he was black; but that is nothing. But he was not fierce, and that is everything. It is only in the last agony of human suffering that he gives way to his rage and his despair, and it is in working his noble nature up to that extremity that Shakspeare has shown his genius and his vast power over the human heart. It was in raising passion to its height, from the lowest beginnings and in spite of all obstacles, in showing the conflict of the soul, the tug and war between love and hatred, rage, tenderness, jealousy, remorse, in laying open the strength and the weaknesses of human nature, in uniting sublimity of thought with the anguish of the keenest woe, in putting in motion all the springs and impulses which make up this our mortal being, and at last blending them in that noble tide of deep and sustained passion, impetuous but majestic, "that flows on to the Propontic and knows no ebb," that the great excellence of Shakspeare lay. Mr. Kean is in general all passion, all energy, all relentless will. He wants imagination, that faculty which contemplates

events, and broods over feelings with a certain calmness and grandeur; his feelings almost always hurry on to action, and hardly ever repose upon themselves. He is too often in the highest key of passion, too uniformly on the verge of extravagance, too constantly on the rack. This does very well in certain characters, as Zanga or Bajazet, where there is merely a physical passion, a boiling of the blood to be expressed, but it is not so in the lofty-minded and generous Moor.

We make these remarks the more freely, because there were parts of the character in which Mr. Kean showed the greatest sublimity and pathos, by laying aside all violence of action. For instance, the tone of voice in which he delivered the beautiful apostrophe, "Then, oh, farewell!" struck on the heart like the swelling notes of some divine music, like the sound of years of departed happiness. Why not all so, or all that is like it? Why not speak the affecting passage, "I found not Cassio's kisses on her lips"—why not speak the last speech, in the same manner? They are both of them, we do most strenuously contend, speeches of pure pathos, of thought and feeling, and not of passion, venting itself in violence of action or gesture. Again, the look, the action, the expression of voice, with which he accompanied the exclamation, "Not a jot, not a jot," was perfectly heart-rending. His vow of revenge against Cassio and his abandonment of his love for Desdemona were as fine as possible. The whole of the third act had an irresistible effect upon the house, and indeed is only to be paralleled by the murder-scene in "Macbeth." . . .

MRS. SIDDONS.

. . . The homage she has received is greater than that which is paid to Queens. The enthusiasm she excited had something idolatrous about it; she was regarded less with admiration than with wonder, as if a being of a superior order had dropped from another sphere to awe the world with the majesty of her appearance. She raised Tragedy to the skies, or brought it down from thence. It was something above nature. We can conceive of nothing grander. She embodied to our imagination the fables of mythology, of the heroic and deified mortals of elder time. She was not less than a goddess, or than a prophetess inspired by the gods. Power was seated on her brow, passion emanated from her breast as from a shrine. She was Tragedy personified. She was the stateliest ornament of the public mind. She was not only the idol of the people, she not only hushed the tumultuous shouts of the pit in

breathless expectation, and quenched the blaze of surrounding beauty in silent tears, but to the retired and lonely student, through long years of solitude, her face has shone as if an eye had appeared from heaven; her name has been as if a voice had opened the chambers of the human heart, or as if a trumpet had awakened the sleeping and the dead. To have seen Mrs. Siddons was an event in every one's life. . . .

Mrs. Siddons's appearance in Lady Macbeth at this theatre on Thursday drew immense crowds to every part of the house. We should suppose that more than half the number of persons were compelled to return without gaining admittance. We succeeded in gaining a seat in one of the back-boxes, and saw this wonderful performance at a distance, and consequently at a disadvantage. Though the distance of place is a disadvantage to a performance like Mrs. Siddons's Lady Macbeth, we question whether the distance of time at which we have formerly seen it is any. It is nearly twenty years since we first saw her in this character, and certainly the impression which we have still left on our minds from that first exhibition is stronger than the one we received the other evening. The sublimity of Mrs. Siddons's acting is such, that the first impulse which it gives to the mind can never wear out, and we doubt whether this original and paramount impression is not weakened, rather than strengthened, by subsequent repetition; if we have seen Mrs. Siddons in Lady Macbeth only once, it is enough. The impression is stamped there for ever, and any after-experiments and critical inquiries only serve to fritter away and tamper with the sacredness of the early recollection.

[*Political Essays, with Sketches of Public Characters*, 1819.]

DISSENTERS AND DISSENTING MINISTERS.

. . . We are told that the different sects are hot-beds of sedition, because they are nurseries of public spirit, and independence, and sincerity of opinion in all other respects. They are so necessarily, and by the supposition. They are Dissenters from the Established Church; they submit voluntarily to certain privations, they incur a certain portion of obloquy and ill-will, for the sake of what they believe to be the truth: they are not time-servers on the face of the evidence, and that is sufficient to expose them to the instinctive hatred and ready ribaldry of those who think venality the first of

virtues, and prostitution of principle the best sacrifice a man can make to the Graces or his Country. The Dissenter does not change his sentiments with the seasons: he does not suit his conscience to his convenience. This is enough to condemn him for a pestilent fellow. He will not give up his principles because they are unfashionable; therefore he is not to be trusted. He speaks his mind bluntly and honestly; therefore he is a secret disturber of the peace, a dark conspirator against the State. On the contrary, the different sects in this country are, or have been, the steadiest supporters of its liberties and laws: they are checks and barriers against the insidious or avowed encroachments of arbitrary power, as effectual and indispensable as any others in the Constitution: they are depositaries of a principle as sacred and somewhat rarer than a devotion to Court-influence—we mean the love of truth. It is hard for any one to be an honest politician who is not born and bred a Dissenter. Nothing else can sufficiently inure and steel a man against the prevailing prejudices of the world but that habit of mind which arises from nonconformity to its decisions in matters of religion. There is a natural alliance between the love of civil and religious liberty, as much as between Church and State. Protestantism was the first school of political liberty in Europe: Presbyterianism has been one great support of it in England. The sectary in religion is taught to appeal to his own bosom for the truth and sincerity of his opinions, and to arm himself with stern indifference to what others think of them. This will no doubt often produce a certain hardness of manner and cold repulsiveness of feeling in trifling matters, but it is the only sound discipline of truth, or inflexible honesty in politics as well as in religion. The same principle of independent inquiry and unbiassed conviction which makes him reject all undue interference between his Maker and his conscience will give a character of uprightness and disregard of personal consequences to his conduct and sentiments in what concerns the most important relations between man and man. He neither subscribes to the dogmas of priests nor truckles to the mandates of Ministers. He has a rigid sense of duty which renders him superior to the caprice, the prejudices, and the injustice of the world; and the same habitual consciousness of rectitude of purpose which leads him to rely for his self-respect on the testimony of his own heart enables him to disregard the groundless malice and rash judgments of his opponents. It is in vain for him to pay his court to the world, to fawn upon power; he labours under certain insurmountable disabilities for becoming a candidate for its favour: he dares to contradict its opinion and to condemn its usages in the most important article of all. The world will always

look cold and askance upon him; and therefore he may defy it with less fear of its censures.

Dissenters are the safest partisans and the steadiest friends. Indeed, they are almost the only people who have an idea of an abstract attachment to a cause or to individuals, from a sense of fidelity, independently of prosperous or adverse circumstances, and in spite of opposition. No patriotism, no public spirit, not reared in that inclement sky and harsh soil, in "the *hortus siccus* of Dissent," will generally last: it will either bend in the storm or droop in the sunshine. *Non ex quovis ligno fit Mercurius.* You cannot engraft a medlar on a crab-apple. A thoroughbred Dissenter will never make an accomplished courtier. . . .

. . . We have known some such [Dissenting ministers] in happier days, who had been brought up and lived from youth to age in the one constant belief of God and of His Christ, and who thought all other things but dross compared with the glory hereafter to be revealed. Their youthful hopes and vanity had been mortified in them, even in their boyish days, by the neglect and supercilious regards of the world; and they turned to look into their own minds for something else to build their hopes and confidence upon. They were true Priests. They set up an image in their own minds—it was truth: they worshipped an idol there—it was justice. They looked on man as their brother, and only bowed the knee to the Highest. Separate from the world, they walked humbly with their God, and lived in thought with those who had borne testimony of a good conscience, with the spirits of just men in all ages. They saw Moses when he slew the Egyptian, and the Prophets who overturned the brazen images, and those who were stoned and sawn asunder. They were with Daniel in the lions' den, and with the three children who passed through the fiery furnace, Meshech, Shadrach, and Abednego; they did not crucify Christ twice over, or deny Him in their hearts, with St. Peter; the "Book of Martyrs" was open to them, they read the story of William Tell, of John Huss and Jerome of Prague, and the old one-eyed Zisca; they had Neale's "History of the Puritans" by heart, and Calamy's "Account of the Two Thousand Ejected Ministers," and gave it to their children to read, with the pictures of the polemical Baxter, the silver-tongued Bates, the mild-looking Calamy, and old honest Howe; they believed in Lardner's "Credibility of the Gospel History;" they were deep-read in the works of the *Fratres Poloni*, Pripscovius, Crellius, Cracovius, who sought out truth in texts of Scripture, and grew blind over Hebrew points; their aspiration after liberty was a sigh uttered from the towers, "time-rent," of the Holy Inquisition; and their zeal for religious

toleration was kindled at the fires of Smithfield. Their sympathy was not with the oppressors but the oppressed. They cherished in their thoughts—and wished to transmit to their posterity—those rights and privileges for asserting which their ancestors had bled on scaffolds, or had pined in dungeons or in foreign climes. Their creed, too, was "Glory to God, peace on earth, good-will to man." This creed, since profaned and rendered vile, they kept fast through good report and evil report. This belief they had, that looks at something out of itself, fixed as the stars, deep as the firmament, that makes of its own heart an altar to truth, a place of worship for what is right, at which it does reverence with praise and prayer like a holy thing, apart and content; that feels that the greatest Being in the universe is always near it, and that all things work together for the good of His creatures, under His guiding hand. This covenant they kept, as the stars keep their courses; this principle they stuck by, for want of knowing better, as it sticks by them to the last. It grew with their growth, it does not wither in their decay. It lives when the almond-tree flourishes, and is not bowed down with the tottering knees. It glimmers with the last feeble eyesight, smiles in the faded cheek like infancy, and lights a path before them to the grave.

THE CHURCH AND ITS CLERGY.

. . . The bane of all religions has been the necessity (real or supposed) of keeping up an attention and attaching a value to external forms and ceremonies. It was, of course, much easier to conform to these, or to manifest a reverence for them, than to practise the virtues or understand the doctrines of true religion, of which they were merely the outward types and symbols. The consequence has been, that the greatest stress has been perpetually laid on what was of the least value and most easily professed. The form of religion has superseded the substance; the means have supplanted the end; and the sterling coin of charity and good works has been driven out of the currency, for the base counterfeits of superstition and intolerance, by all the money-changers and dealers in the temples established to religion throughout the world. Vestments and chalices have been multiplied for the reception of the Holy Spirit; the tagged points of controversy and lacquered varnish of hypocrisy have eaten into the solid substance and texture of piety; "and all the inward acts of worship, issuing from the native strength

of the soul, run out (as Milton expresses it) lavishly to the upper skin, and there harden into the crust of formality." Hence we have had such shoals of

"Eremites and Friars
White, black, and grey, with all their trumpery"—

who have foisted their "idiot and embryo" inventions upon us for truth, and who have fomented all the bad passions of the heart, and let loose all the mischiefs of war, of fire and famine, to avenge the slightest difference of opinion on any one iota of their lying creeds, or the slightest disrespect to any one of those mummeries and idle pageants which they had set up as sacred idols for the world to wonder at. We do not forget, in making these remarks, that there was a time when the persons who will be most annoyed and scandalised at them would have taken a more effectual mode of showing their zeal and indignation; when to have expressed a free opinion on a monk's cowl or a Cardinal's hat would have exposed the writer who had been guilty of such sacrilege to the pains and penalties of excommunication: to be burnt to an *auto da fe;* to be consigned to the dungeons of the Inquisition, or doomed to the mines of Spanish America; to have his nose slit, or his ears cut off, or his hand reduced to a stump. Such were the considerate and humane proceedings by which the priests of former times vindicated their own honour, which they pretended to be the honour of God. Such was their humility, when they had the power. . . .

THE ESTABLISHED CLERGY.

. . . The Established Clergy of any religion are bound to conform their professions of religious belief to a certain popular and lucrative standard, and bound over to keep the peace by certain articles of faith. It is a rare felicity in any one who gives his attention fairly and freely to the subject, and has read the Scriptures, the Misnah, and the Talmud—the Fathers, the Schoolmen, the Socinian divines, the Lutheran and Calvinistic controversy, with innumerable volumes appertaining thereto and illustrative thereof, to believe all the Thirty-nine Articles, "except one." If those who are destined for the episcopal office exercise their understandings honestly and openly upon every one of these questions, how little chance is there that they should come to the same conclusion upon them all! If they do not inquire, what becomes of their independence of under-

standing? If they conform to what they do not believe, what becomes of their honesty? Their estimation in the world, as well as their livelihood, depends on their tamely submitting their understanding to authority at first, and on their not seeing reason to alter their opinion afterwards. Is it likely that a man will intrepidly open his eyes to conviction when he sees poverty and disgrace staring him in the face as the inevitable consequence? . . .

Take one illustration of the truth of all that has been here said, and of more that might be said, upon the subject. It is related in that valuable comment on the present reign and the existing order of things, Bishop Watson's Life, that the late Dr. Paley, having at one time to maintain a thesis in the University, proposed to the Bishop, for his approbation, the following:—"That the Eternity of Hell torments is contradictory to the goodness of God." The Bishop observed, that he thought this a bold doctrine to maintain in the face of the Church; but Paley persisted in his determination. Soon after, however, having sounded the opinions of certain persons high in authority and well read in the orthodoxy of preferment, he came back in great alarm, said he found the thing would not do, and begged, instead of his first thesis, to have the reverse one substituted in its stead, viz.—"That the Eternity of Hell torments is *not* contradictory to the goodness of God." What burning daylight is here thrown on clerical discipline and the bias of a University education! This passage is worth all Mosheim's "Ecclesiastical History," Wood's "Athenæ Oxonienses," and Mr. Coleridge's two "Lay Sermons." This same shuffling divine is the same Dr. Paley who afterwards employed the whole of his life, and his moderate second-hand abilities, in tampering with religion, morality, and politics,—in trimming between his convenience and his conscience,—in crawling between heaven and earth, and trying to cajole both. His celebrated and popular work on Moral Philosophy is celebrated and popular for no other reason, than that it is a somewhat ingenious and amusing apology for existing abuses of every description, by which anything is to be got. It is a very elaborate and consolatory elucidation of the text, *that men should not quarrel with their bread and butter.* It is not an attempt to show what is right, but to palliate and find out plausible excuses for what is wrong. It is a work without the least value, except as a convenient commonplace book or *vade mecum* for tyro politicians and young divines, to smooth their progress in the Church or the State. This work is a text-book in the University. . . .

[*Letter to William Gifford, Esq.*, 1819.]

[If ever an author was justified in attacking an unscrupulous critic, it was Hazlitt. The reader, after perusing what has been said on this subject in the Memoir prefixed to this volume, will not be surprised at the indignant tone of the letter. I have only given the introductory pages. The "bringing to book" of the slanderer is a fine specimen of trenchant exposure.]

SIR,—You have an ugly trick of saying what is not true of any one you do not like; and it will be the object of this letter to cure you of it. You say what you please of others: it is time you were told what you are. In doing this, give me leave to borrow the familiarity of your style:—for the fidelity of the picture I shall be answerable.

You are a little person, but a considerable cat's-paw; and so far worthy of notice. Your clandestine connection with persons high in office constantly influences your opinions, and alone gives importance to them. You are the *Government Critic*, a character nicely differing from that of a Government spy—the invisible link that connects literature with the police. It is your business to keep a strict eye over all writers who differ in opinion with His Majesty's Ministers, and to measure their talents and attainments by the standard of their servility and meanness. For this office you are well qualified. Besides being the Editor of the *Quarterly Review*, you are also paymaster of the band of Gentlemen Pensioners; and when an author comes before you in the one capacity, with whom you are not acquainted in the other, you know how to deal with him. You have your cue beforehand. The distinction between truth and falsehood you make no account of: you mind only the distinction between Whig and Tory. Accustomed to the indulgence of your mercenary virulence and party-spite, you have lost all relish as well as capacity for the unperverted exercises of the understanding, and make up for the obvious want of ability by a barefaced want of principle. The same set of threadbare commonplaces, the same second-hand assortment of abusive nick-names, the same assumption of little magisterial airs of superiority, are regularly repeated; and the ready convenient lie comes in aid of the dearth of other resources, and passes off, with impunity, in the garb of religion and loyalty. If no one finds it out, why then there is no harm done—*snug's the word;* or if it should be detected, it is a good joke, shows spirit and invention in proportion to its grossness and impudence, and it is only a pity that what was so well meant in

so good a cause should miscarry! The end sanctifies the means; and you keep no faith with heretics in religion or government. You are under the protection of the *Court;* and your zeal for your king and country entitles you to say what you choose of every public writer who does not do all in his power to pamper the one into a tyrant, and to trample the other into a herd of slaves. You derive your weight with the great and powerful from the very circumstance that takes away all real weight from your authority, viz., that it is avowedly, and upon every occasion, exerted for no one purpose but to hold up to hatred and contempt whatever opposes in the slightest degree and in the most flagrant instances of abuse their pride and passions. You dictate your opinions to a party, because not one of your opinions is formed upon an honest conviction of the truth or justice of the case, but by collusion with the prejudices, caprice, interest, or vanity of your employers. The mob of well-dressed readers who consult the *Quarterly Review* know that *there is no offence in it.* They put faith in it because they are aware that it is "false and hollow, but will please the ear;" that it will tell them nothing but what they would wish to believe. Your reasoning comes under the head of Court-news; your taste is a standard of the prevailing *ton* in certain circles, like Ackerman's dresses for May. When you damn an author, one knows that he is not a favourite at Carlton House. When you say that an author cannot write common sense or English, you mean that he does not believe in the doctrine of *divine right.* Of course, the clergy and gentry will not read such an author. Your praise or blame has nothing to do with the merits of a work, but with the party to which the writer belongs, or is in the inverse ratio of its merits. The dingy cover that wraps the pages of the *Quarterly Review* does not contain a concentrated essence of taste and knowledge, but is a receptacle for the scum and sediment of all the prejudice, bigotry, ill-will, ignorance, and rancour afloat in the kingdom. This the fools and knaves who pin their faith on you know, and it is on this account they pin their faith on you. They come to you for a scale not of literary talent, but of political subserviency. They want you to set your mark of approbation on a writer as a thorough-paced tool, or of reprobation as an honest man. Your fashionable readers, Sir, are hypocrites as well as knaves and fools; and the watchword, the practical intelligence they want, must be conveyed to them without implied offence to their candour and liberality, in the *patois* and gibberish of fraud of which you are a master. When you begin to jabber about common sense and English, they know what to be at, shut up the book, and wonder that any respectable publisher can

be found to let it lie on his counter, as much as if it were a Petition for Reform. . . . There is something in your nature and habits that fits you for the situation into which your good fortune has thrown you. In the first place, you are in no danger of exciting the jealousy of your patrons by a mortifying display of extraordinary talents, while your sordid devotion to their will and to your own interest at once ensures their gratitude and contempt. To crawl and lick the dust is all they expect of you, and all you can do. Otherwise they might fear your power, for they could have no dependence on your fidelity: but they take you with safety and with fondness to their bosoms; for they know that if you cease to be a tool you cease to be anything. If you had an exuberance of wit, the unguarded use of it might sometimes glance at your employers; if you were sincere yourself, you might respect the motives of others; if you had sufficient understanding, you might attempt an argument, and fail in it. But luckily for yourself and your admirers, you are but the dull echo, "the tenth transmitter" of some hackneyed jest: the want of all manly and candid feeling in yourself only excites your suspicion and antipathy to it in others, as something at which your nature recoils; your slowness to understand makes you quick to misrepresent; and you infallibly make nonsense of what you cannot possibly conceive. What seem your wilful blunders are often the felicity of natural parts, and your want of penetration has all the appearance of an affected petulance!

Again, of an humble origin yourself, you recommend your performances to persons of fashion by always abusing *low people*, with the smartness of a lady's waiting-woman and the independent spirit of a travelling tutor. Raised from the lowest rank to your present despicable eminence in the world of letters, you are indignant that any one should attempt to rise into notice, except by the same regular trammels and servile gradations, or should go about to separate the stamp of merit from the badge of sycophancy. The silent listener in select circles, and menial tool of noble families, you have become the oracle of Church and State. The purveyor to the prejudices or passions of a private patron succeeds, by no other title, to regulate the public taste. You have felt the inconveniences of poverty, and look up with base and grovelling admiration to the advantages of wealth and power: you have had to contend with the mechanical difficulties of a want of education, and you see nothing in learning but its mechanical uses. A self-taught man naturally becomes a pedant, and mistakes the means of knowledge for the end, unless he is a man of genius; and you, Sir, are not a man of genius. From having known nothing originally, you think

it a great acquisition to know anything now, no matter what or how small it is—nay, the smaller and more insignificant it is, the more curious you seem to think it, as it is farther removed from common sense and human nature. The collating of points and commas is the highest game your literary ambition can reach to, and the squabbles of editors are to you infinitely more important than the meaning of an author. You think more of the letter than the spirit of a passage, and, in your eagerness to show your minute superiority over those who have gone before you, generally miss both. In comparing yourself with others, you make a considerable mistake. You suppose the common advantages of a liberal education to be something peculiar to yourself, and calculate your progress beyond the rest of the world from the obscure point at which you first set out. Yet your overweening self-complacency is never easy but in the expression of your contempt for others; like a conceited mechanic in a village ale-house, you would set down every one who differs from you as an ignorant blockhead, and very fairly infer that any one who is beneath yourself must be nothing. You have been well called an ultra-Crepidarian critic. From the difficulty you yourself have in constructing a sentence of common grammar, and your frequent failures, you instinctively presume that no author who comes under the lash of your pen can understand his mother-tongue: and again, you suspect every one who is not your "very good friend" of knowing nothing of the Greek or Latin, because you are surprised to think how you came by your own knowledge of them. There is an innate littleness and vulgarity in all you do. In combating an opinion, you never take a broad and liberal ground, state it fairly, allow what there is of truth or an appearance of truth, and then assert your own judgment by exposing what is deficient in it, and giving a more masterly view of the subject. No: this would be committing your powers and pretensions where you dare not trust them. You know yourself better. You deny the meaning altogether, misquote or misapply, and then plume yourself on your own superiority to the absurdity you have created. Your triumph over your antagonists is the triumph of your cunning and mean-spiritedness over some nonentity of your own making; and your wary self-knowledge shrinks from a comparison with any but the most puny pretensions, as the spider retreats from the caterpillar into its web.

There cannot be a greater nuisance than a dull, envious, pragmatical, low-bred man, who is placed as you are in the situation of the Editor of such a work as the *Quarterly Review*. Conscious that his reputation stands on very slender and narrow grounds, he is naturally jealous of that of others. He insults unsuccessful

authors: he hates successful ones. He is angry at the faults of a work; more angry at its excellences. If an opinion is old, he treats it with supercilious indifference; if it is new, it provokes his rage. Everything beyond his limited range of inquiry appears to him a paradox and an absurdity; and he resents every suggestion of the kind as an imposition on the public and an imputation on his own sagacity. He cavils at what he does not comprehend, and misrepresents what he knows to be true. Bound to go through the nauseous task of abusing all those who are not, like himself, the abject tools of power, his irritation increases with the number of obstacles he encounters and the number of sacrifices he is obliged to make of common sense and decency to his interest and self-conceit. Every instance of prevarication he wilfully commits makes him more in love with hypocrisy, and every indulgence of his hired malignity makes him more disposed to repeat the insult and the injury. His understanding becomes daily more distorted, and his feelings more and more callous. Grown old in the service of corruption, he drivels on to the last with prostituted impotence and shameless effrontery; salves a meagre reputation for wit, by venting the driblets of his spleen and impertinence on others; answers their arguments by confuting himself; mistakes habitual obtuseness of intellect for a particular acuteness, not to be imposed upon by shallow appearances; unprincipled rancour for zealous loyalty; and the irritable, discontented, vindictive, peevish effusions of bodily pain and mental imbecility for proofs of refinement of taste and strength of understanding.

Such, Sir, is the picture of which you have sat for the outline:—all that remains is to fill up the little, mean, crooked, dirty details. The task is to me no very pleasant one; for I can feel very little ambition to follow you through your ordinary routine of pettifogging objections and barefaced assertions, the only difficulty of making which is to throw aside all regard to truth and decency, and the only difficulty in answering them is to overcome one's contempt for the writer. But you are a nuisance, and should be abated.

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ON POETRY IN GENERAL.

The best general notion which I can give of poetry is, that it is the natural impression of any object or event, by its vividness exciting an involuntary movement of imagination and passion, and producing, by sympathy, a certain modulation of the voice, or sounds, expressing it. . . .

Poetry is the language of the imagination and the passions. It relates to whatever gives immediate pleasure or pain to the human mind. It comes home to the bosoms and businesses of men; for nothing but what so comes home to them in the most general and intelligible shape can be a subject for poetry. Poetry is the universal language which the heart holds with nature and itself. He who has a contempt for poetry cannot have much respect for himself, or for anything else. It is not a mere frivolous accomplishment (as some persons have been led to imagine), the trifling amusement of a few idle readers or leisure hours: it has been the study and delight of mankind in all ages. Many people suppose that poetry is something to be found only in books, contained in lines of ten syllables with like endings; but wherever there is a sense of beauty, or power, or harmony, as in the motion of a wave of the sea, in the growth of a flower that "spreads its sweet leaves to the air, and dedicates its beauty to the sun," *there* is poetry, in its birth. If history is a grave study, poetry may be said to be a graver: its materials lie deeper, and are spread wider. History treats, for the most part, of the cumbrous and unwieldy masses of things, the empty cases in which the affairs of the world are packed, under the heads of intrigue or war, in different states, and from century to century; but there is no thought or feeling that can have entered into the mind of man which he would be eager to communicate to others, or which they would listen to with delight, that is not a fit subject for poetry. It is not a branch of authorship; it is "the stuff of which our life is made." The rest is "mere oblivion," a dead letter: for all that is worth remembering in life is the poetry of it. Fear is poetry, hope is poetry, love is poetry, hatred is poetry; contempt, jealousy, remorse, admiration, wonder, pity, despair, or madness are all poetry. Poetry is that fine particle within us that expands, rarefies, refines, raises our whole being:

without it "man's life is poor as beast's." Man is a poetical animal; and those of us who do not study the principles of poetry act upon them all our lives, like Molière's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, who had always spoken prose without knowing it. The child is a poet, in fact, when he first plays at hide-and-seek, or repeats the story of Jack the Giant-killer; the shepherd-boy is a poet when he first crowns his mistress with a garland of flowers; the countryman, when he stops to look at the rainbow; the city apprentice, when he gazes after the Lord Mayor's show; the miser, when he hugs his gold; the courtier, who builds his hopes upon a smile; the savage, who paints his idol with blood; the slave, who worships a tyrant; or the tyrant, who fancies himself a god; the vain, the ambitious, the proud, the choleric man, the hero and the coward, the beggar and the king, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, all live in a world of their own making; and the poet does no more than describe what all the others think and act. . . .

Poetry, then, is an imitation of nature, but the imagination and the passions are a part of man's nature. We shape things according to our wishes and fancies, without poetry; but poetry is the most emphatical language that can be found for those creations of the mind "which ecstasy is very cunning in." Neither a mere description of natural objects nor a mere delineation of natural feelings, however distinct or forcible, constitutes the ultimate end and aim of poetry, without the heightenings of the imagination. The light of poetry is not only a direct but also a reflected light, that, while it shows us the object, throws a sparkling radiance on all around it: the flame of the passions, communicated to the imagination, reveals to us, as with a flash of lightning, the inmost recesses of thought, and penetrates our whole being. Poetry represents forms chiefly as they suggest other forms: feelings, as they suggest forms or other feelings. Poetry puts a spirit of life and motion into the universe. It describes the flowing, not the fixed. It does not define the limits of sense, or analyse the distinctions of the understanding, but signifies the excess of the imagination beyond the actual or ordinary impression of any object or feeling. The poetical impression of any object is that uneasy, exquisite sense of beauty or power that cannot be contained within itself, that is impatient of all limit, that (as flame bends to flame) strives to link itself to some other image of kindred beauty or grandeur, to enshrine itself, as it were, in the highest forms of fancy, and to relieve the aching sense of pleasure by expressing it in the boldest manner, and by the most striking examples of the same quality in other instances. Poetry, according to Lord Bacon, for this reason "has something

divine in it, because it raises the mind and hurries it into sublimity, by conforming the shows of things to the desires of the soul, instead of subjecting the soul to external things, as reason and history do." It is strictly the language of the imagination; and the imagination is that faculty which represents objects, not as they are in themselves, but as they are moulded by other thoughts and feelings, into an infinite variety of shapes and combinations of power. This language is not the less true to nature because it is false in point of fact, but so much the more true and natural if it conveys the impression which the object under the influence of passion makes on the mind. Let an object, for instance, be presented to the senses in a state of agitation or fear, and the imagination will distort or magnify the object, and convert it into the likeness of whatever is most proper to encourage the fear. . . .

One mode in which the dramatic exhibition of passion excites our sympathy without raising our disgust is, that in proportion as it sharpens the edge of calamity and disappointment it strengthens the desire of good. It enhances our consciousness of the blessing, by making us sensible of the magnitude of the loss. The storm of passion lays bare and shows us the rich depths of the human soul: the whole of our existence, the sum-total of our passions and pursuits, of that which we desire and that which we dread, is brought before us by contrast; the action and reaction are equal; the keenness of immediate suffering only gives us a more intense aspiration after and a more intimate participation with the antagonist world of good: makes us drink deeper of the cup of human life: tugs at the heart-strings: loosens the pressure about them, and calls the springs of thought and feeling into play with tenfold force. . . .

Poetry is in all its shapes the language of the imagination and the passions, of fancy and will. Nothing, therefore, can be more absurd than the outcry which has been sometimes raised by frigid and pedantic critics for reducing the language of poetry to the standard of common sense and reason; for the end and use of poetry, "both at the first and now, was and is to hold the mirror up to nature," seen through the medium of passion and imagination, not divested of that medium by means of literal truth, or abstract reason. The painter of history might as well be required to represent the face of a person who has just trod upon a serpent with the still-life expression of a common portrait, as the poet to describe the most striking and vivid impressions which things can be supposed to make upon the mind in the language of common conversation. Let who will strip nature of the colours and the shapes of fancy, the poet is not bound to do so; the impressions of

common sense and strong imagination, that is, of passion and indifference, cannot be the same, and they must have a separate language to do justice to either. Objects must strike differently upon the mind, independently of what they are in themselves, as long as we have a different interest in them, as we see them in a different point of view, nearer or at a greater distance (morally or physically speaking), from novelty, from old acquaintance, from our ignorance of them, from our fear of their consequences, from contrast, from unexpected likeness. We can no more take away the faculty of the imagination than we can see all objects without light or shade. Some things must dazzle us by their preternatural light; others must hold us in suspense, and tempt our curiosity to explore their obscurity. Those who would dispel these various illusions, to give us their drab-coloured creation in their stead, are not very wise. Let the naturalist, if he will, catch the glow-worm, carry it home with him in a box, and find it next morning nothing but a little grey worm: let the poet or the lover of poetry visit it at evening, when beneath the scented hawthorn and the crescent moon it has built itself a palace of emerald light. This is also one part of nature, one appearance which the glow-worm presents, and that not the least interesting; so poetry is one part of the history of the human mind, though it is neither science nor philosophy. It cannot be concealed, however, that the progress of knowledge and refinement has a tendency to circumscribe the limits of the imagination and to clip the wings of poetry. The province of the imagination is principally visionary, the unknown and undefined: the understanding restores things to their natural boundaries, and strips them of their fanciful pretensions. . . .

Wherever any object takes such a hold of the mind as to make us dwell upon it and brood over it, melting the heart in tenderness, or kindling it to a sentiment of enthusiasm; wherever a movement of imagination or passion is impressed on the mind, by which it seeks to prolong and repeat the emotion, to bring all other objects into accord with it, and to give the same movement of harmony, sustained and continuous, or gradually varied, according to the occasion, to the sounds that express it—this is poetry. The musical in sound is the sustained and continuous; the musical in thought is the sustained and continuous also. There is a near connection between music and deep-rooted passion. Mad people sing. As often as articulation passes naturally into intonation, there poetry begins. Where one idea gives a tone and colour to others, where one feeling melts others into it, there can be no reason why the same principle should not be extended to the sounds by which the voice utters these

emotions of the soul, and blends syllables and lines into each other. It is to supply the inherent defect of harmony in the customary mechanism of language, to make the sound an echo to the sense, when the sense becomes a sort of echo to itself—to mingle the tide of verse, "the golden cadences of poetry," with the tide of feeling, flowing and murmuring as it flows—in short, to take the language of the imagination from off the ground, and enable it to spread its wings where it may indulge its own impulses:

> "Sailing with supreme dominion
> Through the azure deep of air"—

without being stopped, or fretted, or diverted with the abruptnesses and petty obstacles, and discordant flats and sharps of prose, that poetry was invented. It is to common language what springs are to a carriage or wings to feet. . . .

I will mention three works which come as near to poetry as possible without absolutely being so; namely, the "Pilgrim's Progress," "Robinson Crusoe," and the Tales of Boccaccio. Chaucer and Dryden have translated some of the last into English rhyme, but the essence and the power of poetry was there before. That which lifts the spirit above the earth, which draws the soul out of itself with indescribable longings, is poetry in kind, and generally fit to become so in name, by being "married to immortal verse." If it is of the essence of poetry to strike and fix the imagination, whether we will or no, to make the eye of childhood glisten with the starting tear, to be never thought of afterwards with indifference, John Bunyan and Daniel Defoe may be permitted to pass for poets in their way. The mixture of fancy and reality in the "Pilgrim's Progress" was never equalled in any allegory. His pilgrims walk above the earth, and yet are on it. What zeal, what beauty, what truth of fiction! What deep feeling in the description of Christian's swimming across the water at last, and in the picture of the Shining Ones within the gates, with wings at their backs and garlands on their heads, who are to wipe all tears from his eyes! The writer's genius, though not "dipped in dews of Castalie," was baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire. The prints in this book are no small part of it. If the confinement of Philoctetes in the island of Lemnos was a subject for the most beautiful of all the Greek tragedies, what shall we say to Robinson Crusoe in his? Take the speech of the Greek hero on leaving his cave, beautiful as it is, and compare it with the reflections of the English adventurer in his solitary place of confinement. The thoughts of home, and of all from which he is for ever cut off, swell and press against his bosom, as the heaving ocean rolls

its ceaseless tide against the rocky shore, and the very beatings of his heart become audible in the eternal silence that surrounds him. Thus he says:

"As I walked about, either in my hunting, or for viewing the country, the anguish of my soul at my condition would break out upon me on a sudden, and my very heart would die within me to think of the woods, the mountains, and deserts I was in; and how I was a prisoner, locked up with the eternal bars and bolts of the ocean, in an uninhabited wilderness, without redemption. In the midst of the greatest composures of my mind, this would break out upon me like a storm, and make me wring my hands, and weep like a child. Sometimes it would take me in the middle of my work, and I would immediately sit down and sigh, and look upon the ground for an hour or two together, and this was still worse to me, for if I could burst into tears or vent myself in words, it would go off, and the grief having exhausted itself would abate."

. . . I shall conclude this general account with some remarks on four of the principal works of poetry in the world, at different periods of history—Homer, the Bible, Dante, and, let me add, Ossian. In Homer, the principle of action or life is predominant; in the Bible, the principle of faith and the idea of Providence; Dante is a personification of blind will; and in Ossian we see the decay of life and the lag-end of the world. Homer's poetry is the heroic: it is full of life and action; it is bright as the day, strong as a river. In the vigour of his intellect, he grapples with all the objects of nature, and enters into all the relations of social life. He saw many countries, and the manners of many men; and he has brought them all together in his poem. He describes his heroes going to battle with a prodigality of life, arising from an exuberance of animal spirits; we see them before us, their number and their order of battle, poured out upon the plain "all plumed like ostriches, like eagles newly bathed, wanton as goats, wild as young bulls, youthful as May, and gorgeous as the sun at midsummer," covered with glittering armour, with dust and blood; while the gods quaff their nectar in golden cups or mingle in the fray; and the old men assembled on the walls of Troy rise up with reverence as Helen passes by them. The multitude of things in Homer is wonderful; their splendour, their truth, their force and variety. His poetry is, like his religion, the poetry of number and form: he describes the bodies as well as the souls of men.

The poetry of the Bible is that of imagination and of faith: it is abstract and disembodied: it is not the poetry of form, but of power; not of multitude, but of immensity. It does not divide

into many, but aggrandises into one. Its ideas of nature are like its ideas of God. It is not the poetry of social life, but of solitude: each man seems alone in the world, with the original forms of nature, the rocks, the earth, and the sky. It is not the poetry of action or heroic enterprise, but of faith in a supreme Providence and resignation to the power that governs the universe. As the idea of God was removed farther from humanity and a scattered polytheism, it became more profound and intense, as it became more universal, for the Infinite is present to everything: "If we fly into the uttermost parts of the earth, it is there also; if we turn to the east or the west, we cannot escape from it." Man is thus aggrandised in the image of his Maker. The history of the patriarchs is of this kind; they are founders of a chosen race of people, the inheritors of the earth; they exist in the generations which are to come after them. Their poetry, like their religious creed, is vast, unformed, obscure, and infinite; a vision is upon it; an invisible hand is suspended over it. The spirit of the Christian religion consists in the glory hereafter to be revealed; but in the Hebrew dispensation Providence took an immediate share in the affairs of this life. Jacob's dream arose out of this intimate communion between heaven and earth: it was this that let down, in the sight of the youthful patriarch, a golden ladder from the sky to the earth, with angels ascending and descending upon it, and shed a light upon the lonely place, which can never pass away. The story of Ruth, again, is as if all the depth of natural affection in the human race was involved in her breast. There are descriptions in the Book of Job more prodigal of imagery, more intense in passion, than anything in Homer; as that of the state of his prosperity, and of the vision that came upon him by night. The metaphors in the Old Testament are more boldly figurative. Things were collected more into masses, and gave a greater momentum to the imagination.

Dante was the father of modern poetry, and he may therefore claim a place in this connection. His poem is the first great step from Gothic darkness and barbarism; and the struggle of thought in it to burst the thraldom in which the human mind had been so long held is felt in every page. He stood bewildered, not appalled on that dark shore which separates the ancient and the modern world, and saw the glories of antiquity dawning through the abyss of time, while revelation opened its passage to the other world. He was lost in wonder at what had been done before him, and he dared to emulate it. Dante seems to have been indebted to the Bible for the gloomy tone of his mind, as well as for the prophetic fury which exalts and kindles his poetry; but he is utterly unlike Homer. His

genius is not a sparkling flame, but the sullen heat of a furnace. He is power, passion, self-will personified. In all that relates to the descriptive or fanciful part of poetry, he bears no comparison to many who had gone before, or who have come after him; but there is a gloomy abstraction in his conceptions, which lies like a dead weight upon the mind—a benumbing stupor, a breathless awe, from the intensity of the impression—a terrible obscurity, like that which oppresses us in dreams—an identity of interest, which moulds every object to its own purposes, and clothes all things with the passions and imaginations of the human soul—that make amends for all other deficiencies. The immediate objects he presents to the mind are not much in themselves; they want grandeur, beauty, and order; but they become everything by the force of the character he impresses upon them. His mind lends its own power to the objects which it contemplates, instead of borrowing it from them. He takes advantage even of the nakedness and dreary vacuity of his subject. His imagination peoples the shades of death, and broods over the silent air. He is the severest of all writers, the most hard and impenetrable, the most opposite to the flowery and glittering; [the writer] who relies most on his own power, and the sense of it in others, and who leaves most room to the imagination of his readers. Dante's only endeavour is to interest; and he interests by exciting our sympathy with the emotion by which he is himself possessed. He does not place before us the objects by which that emotion has been created; but he seizes on the attention, by showing us the effect they produce on his feelings; and his poetry accordingly gives the same thrilling and overwhelming sensation which is caught by gazing on the face of a person who has seen some object of horror. The improbability of the events, the abruptness and monotony in the "Inferno" are excessive; but the interest never flags, from the continued earnestness of the author's mind. Dante's great power is in combining internal feelings with external objects. . . .

Another writer whom I shall mention last, and whom I cannot persuade myself to think a mere modern in the groundwork, is Ossian. He is a feeling and a name that can never be destroyed in the minds of his readers. As Homer is the first vigour and lustihead, Ossian is the decay and old age of poetry. He lives only in the recollection and regret of the past. There is one impression which he conveys more entirely than all other poets; namely, the sense of privation, the loss of all things, of friends, of good name, of country; he is even without God in the world. He converses only with the spirits of the departed; with the motionless and silent clouds. The cold moonlight sheds its faint lustre on his

head; the fox peeps out of the ruined tower; the thistle waves its beard to the wandering gale; and the strings of his harp seem, as the hand of age, as the tale of other times, passes over them, to sigh and rustle like the dry reeds in the winter's wind! The feeling of cheerless desolation, of the loss of the pith and sap of existence, of the annihilation of the substance, and the clinging to the shadow of all things, as in a mock-embrace, is here perfect. In this way, the lamentation of Selma for the loss of Salgar is the finest of all. If it were indeed possible to show that this writer was nothing, it would only be another instance of mutability, another blank made, another void left in the heart, another confirmation of that feeling which makes him so often complain, "Roll on, ye dark brown years, ye bring no joy on your wing to Ossian!"

CHAUCER AND SPENSER.

Chaucer (who has been very properly considered as the father of English poetry) preceded Spenser by two centuries. He is supposed to have been born in London, in the year 1328, during the reign of Edward III., and to have died in 1400, at the age of seventy-two. He received a learned education at one or at both of the Universities, and travelled early into Italy, where he became thoroughly imbued with the spirit and excellences of the great Italian poets and prose-writers, Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, and is said to have had a personal interview with one of these, Petrarch. He was connected by marriage with the famous John of Gaunt, through whose interest he was introduced into several public employments. Chaucer was an active partisan, a religious reformer, and from the share he took in some disturbances on one occasion, he was obliged to fly the country. On his return he was imprisoned, and made his peace with Government, as it is said, by a discovery of his associates. Fortitude does not appear at any time to have been the distinguishing virtue of poets. There is, however, an obvious similarity between the practical turn of Chaucer's mind and restless impatience of his character and the tone of his writings. Yet it would be too much to attribute the one to the other as cause and effect; for Spenser, whose poetical temperament was as effeminate as Chaucer's was stern and masculine, was equally engaged in public affairs, and had mixed equally in the great world. So much does native disposition predominate over accidental circumstances, moulding them to its previous bent and purposes! For while Chaucer's intercourse with the busy world, and collision with the actual passions and conflicting

interest of others, seemed to brace the sinews of his understanding, and gave to his writings the air of a man who describes persons and things that he had known and been intimately concerned in, the same opportunities, operating on a differently constituted frame, only served to alienate Spenser's mind the more from the "close-pent-up" scenes of ordinary life, and to make him "rive their concealing continents," to give himself up to the unrestrained indulgence of "flowery tenderness."

It is not possible for any two writers to be more opposite in this respect. Spenser delighted in luxurious enjoyment; Chaucer, in severe activity of mind. As Spenser was the most romantic and visionary, Chaucer was the most practical of all the great poets, the most a man of business and the world. His poetry reads like history. Everything has a downright reality, at least in the relater's mind. A simile or a sentiment is as if it were given in upon evidence. . . .

He speaks of what he wishes to describe with the accuracy, the discrimination of one who relates what has happened to himself, or has had the best information from those who have been eye-witnesses of it. The strokes of his pencil always tell. He dwells only on the essential, on that which would be interesting to the persons really concerned: yet, as he never omits any material circumstance, he is prolix from the number of points on which he touches, without being diffuse on any one; and is sometimes tedious from the fidelity with which he adheres to his subject, as other writers are from the frequency of their digressions from it. The chain of his story is composed of a number of fine links, closely connected together, and riveted by a single blow. There is an instance of the minuteness which he introduces into his most serious descriptions in his account of Palamon when left alone in his cell:

> "Swiche sorrow he maketh that the grete tour
> Resouned of his yelling and clamour:
> The pure fetters on his shinnes grete
> Were of his bitter salte teres wete."

The mention of this last circumstance looks like a part of the instructions he had to follow, which he had no discretionary power to leave out or introduce at pleasure. He is contented to find grace and beauty in truth. He exhibits for the most part the naked object, with little drapery thrown over it. His metaphors, which are few, are not for ornament but use, and as like as possible to the things themselves. He does not affect to show his power over the reader's mind, but the power which his subject has over his own.

The readers of Chaucer's poetry feel more nearly what the persons he describes must have felt than perhaps those of any other poet. His sentiments are not voluntary effusions of the poet's fancy, but [are] founded on the natural impulses and habitual prejudices of the characters he has to represent. There is an inveteracy of purpose, a sincerity of feeling, which never relaxes or grows vapid, in whatever they do or say. There is no artificial, pompous display, but a strict parsimony of the poet's materials, like the rude simplicity of the age in which he lived. His poetry resembles the root just springing from the ground, rather than the full-blown flower. His muse is no "babbling gossip of the air," fluent and redundant, but, like a stammerer or a dumb person, that has just found the use of speech, crowds many things together with eager haste, with anxious pauses, and fond repetitions to prevent mistake. His words point as an index to the objects, like the eye or finger. There were none of the commonplaces of poetic diction in our author's time, no reflected lights of fancy, no borrowed roseate tints; he was obliged to inspect things for himself, to look narrowly, and almost to handle the object, as in the obscurity of morning we partly see and partly grope our way; so that his descriptions have a sort of tangible character belonging to them, and produce the effect of sculpture on the mind. Chaucer had an equal eye for truth of nature and discrimination of character; and his interest in what he saw gave new distinctness and force to his power of observation. The picturesque and the dramatic are in him closely blended together, and hardly distinguishable; for he principally describes external appearances as indicating character, as symbols of internal sentiment. There is a meaning in what he sees; and it is this which catches his eye by sympathy. Thus the costume and dress of the Canterbury Pilgrims, of the Knight, the Squire, the Oxford Scholar, the Gap-toothed Wife of Bath, and the rest speak for themselves. . . .

Chaucer's descriptions of natural scenery possess the same sort of characteristic excellence, or what might be termed *gusto*. They have a local truth and freshness, which gives the very feeling of the air, the coolness or moisture of the ground. Inanimate objects are thus made to have a fellow-feeling in the interest of the story, and render back the sentiment of the speaker's mind. One of the finest parts of Chaucer is of this mixed kind. It is the beginning of the "Flower and the Leaf," where he describes the delight of that young beauty, shrouded in her bower, and listening, in the morning of the year, to the singing of the nightingale; while her joy rises with the rising song, and gushes out afresh at every pause, and is borne along with the full tide of pleasure, and still increases, and repeats,

and prolongs itself, and knows no ebb. The coolness of the arbour, its retirement, the early time of the day, the sudden starting up of the birds in the neighbouring bushes, the eager delight with which they devour and rend the opening buds and flowers, are expressed with a truth and feeling which make the whole appear like the recollection of an actual scene. . . .

The interval between Chaucer and Spenser is long and dreary. There is nothing to fill up the chasm but the names of Occleve, "ancient Gower," Lydgate, Wyatt, Surrey, and Sackville. Spenser flourished in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and was sent with Sir John Davies into Ireland, of which he has left behind him some tender recollections in his description of the bog of Allan, and a record in an ably written paper, containing observations on the state of that country and the means of improving it, which remain in full force to the present day. Spenser died at an obscure inn in London, it is supposed in distressed circumstances. The treatment he received from Burleigh is well known. Spenser, as well as Chaucer, was engaged in active life; but the genius of his poetry was not active; it is inspired by the love of ease and the relaxation from all the cares and business of life. Of all the poets, he is the most poetical. Though much later than Chaucer, his obligations to preceding writers were less. He has in some measure borrowed the plan of his poem (as a number of distinct narratives) from Ariosto; but he has engrafted upon it an exuberance of fancy and an endless voluptuousness of sentiment which are not to be found in the Italian writer. Further, Spenser is even more of an inventor in the subject-matter. There is an originality, richness, and variety in his allegorical personages and fictions which almost vies with the splendour of the ancient mythology. If Ariosto transports us into the regions of romance, Spenser's poetry is all fairy-land. In Ariosto, we walk upon the ground, in a company gay, fantastic, and adventurous enough. In Spenser, we wander in another world among ideal beings. The poet takes and lays us in the lap of a lovelier nature, by the sound of softer streams, among greener hills and fairer valleys. He paints nature, not as we find it, but as we expected to find it, and fulfils the delightful promise of our youth. He waves his wand of enchantment, and at once embodies airy beings, and throws a delicious veil over all actual objects. The two worlds of reality and of fiction are poised on the wings of his imagination. His ideas, indeed, seem more distinct than his perceptions. He is the painter of abstractions, and describes them with dazzling minuteness. . . .

The language of Spenser is full and copious to overflowing: it is

less pure and idiomatic than Chaucer's, and is enriched and adorned with phrases borrowed from the different languages of Europe, both ancient and modern. He was, probably, seduced into a certain license of expression by the difficulty of filling up the moulds of his complicated rhymed stanza from the limited resources of his native language. This stanza, with alternate and repeatedly recurring rhymes, is borrowed from the Italians. It was peculiarly fitted to their language, which abounds in similar vowel terminations, and is as little adapted to ours, from the stubborn, unaccommodating resistance which the consonant endings of the northern languages make to this sort of endless sing-song. Not that I would, on that account, part with the stanza of Spenser. We are, perhaps, indebted to this very necessity of finding out new forms of expression, and to the occasional faults to which it led, for a poetical language rich and varied and magnificent beyond all former, and almost all later, example. His versification is at once the most smooth and the most sounding in the language. It is a labyrinth of sweet sounds, "in many a winding bout of linked sweetness long drawn out," that would cloy by their very sweetness, but that the ear is constantly relieved and enchanted by their continued variety of modulation, dwelling on the pauses of the action, or flowing on in a fuller tide of harmony with the movement of the sentiment. It has not the bold dramatic transitions of Shakspeare's blank verse, nor the high-raised tone of Milton's; but it is the perfection of melting harmony, dissolving the soul in pleasure, or holding it captive in the chains of suspense. Spenser was the poet of our waking dreams; and he has invented not only a language, but a music of his own for them. The undulations are infinite, like those of the waves of the sea; but the effect is still the same, lulling the senses into a deep oblivion of the jarring noises of the world, from which we have no wish to be over recalled.

SHAKSPEARE AND MILTON.

In looking back to the great works of genius in former times, we are sometimes disposed to wonder at the little progress which has since been made in poetry, and in the arts of imitation in general. But this is perhaps a foolish wonder. Nothing can be more contrary to the fact than the supposition that in what we understand by the *fine arts* as painting and poetry, relative perfection is only the result of repeated efforts in successive periods, and that what has been once well done constantly leads to something better. What is mechanical, reducible to rule, or capable of demonstration,

is progressive, and admits of gradual improvement: what is not mechanical, or definite, but depends on feeling, taste, and genius, very soon becomes stationary or retrograde, and loses more than it gains by transfusion. The contrary opinion is a vulgar error which has grown up, like many others, from transferring an analogy of one kind to something quite distinct, without taking into account the difference in the nature of the things or attending to the difference of the results. For most persons, finding what wonderful advances have been made in Biblical criticism, in chemistry, in mechanics, in geometry, astronomy, &c., *i.e.*, in things depending on mere inquiry and experiment or on absolute demonstration, have been led hastily to conclude that there was a general tendency in the efforts of the human intellect to improve by repetition, and, in all other arts and institutions, to grow perfect and mature by time. We look back upon the theological creed of our ancestors, and their discoveries in natural philosophy, with a smile of pity: science, and the arts connected with it, have all had their infancy, their youth and manhood, and seem to contain in them no principle of limitation or decay; and, inquiring no further about the matter, we infer, in the intoxication of our pride and the height of our self-congratulation, that the same progress has been made, and will continue to be made, in all other things which are the work of man. The fact, however, stares us so plainly in the face, that one would think the smallest reflection must suggest the truth, and overturn our sanguine theories. The greatest poets, the ablest orators, the best painters, and the finest sculptors that the world ever saw appeared soon after the birth of these arts, and lived in a state of society which was, in other respects, comparatively barbarous. Those arts, which depend on individual genius and incommunicable power, have always leaped at once from infancy to manhood, from the first rude dawn of invention to their meridian height and dazzling lustre, and have in general declined ever after. This is the peculiar distinction and privilege of each, of science and of art: of the one, never to attain its utmost limit of perfection; and of the other, to arrive at it almost at once. Homer, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, Dante, and Ariosto (Milton alone was of a later age, and not the worse for it): Raphael, Titian, Michael Angelo, Correggio, Cervantes, and Boccaccio: the Greek sculptors and tragedians: all lived near the beginning of their arts, perfected, and all but created them. These giant-sons of genius stand indeed upon the earth, but they tower above their fellows; and the long line of their successors, in different ages, does not interpose any object to obstruct their view or lessen their brightness. In strength and stature they are unrivalled;

in grace and beauty they have not been surpassed. In after-ages and more refined periods (as they are called) great men have arisen, one by one, as it were by throes and at intervals; though in general the best of these cultivated and artificial minds were of an inferior order, as Tasso and Pope among poets; Guido and Vandyke among painters. But in the earlier stages of the arts, as soon as the first mechanical difficulties had been got over, and the language was sufficiently acquired, they rose by clusters and in constellations, never so to rise again!

The arts of painting and poetry are conversant with the world of thought within us, and with the world of sense around us—with what we know, and see, and feel intimately. They flow from the sacred shrine of our own breasts, and are kindled at the living lamp of nature. But the pulse of the passions assuredly beat as high, the depths and soundings of the human heart were as well understood, three thousand or three hundred years ago as they are at present: the face of nature and "the human face divine" shone as bright then as they have ever done. But it is *their* light, reflected by true genius on art, that marks out its path before it, and sheds a glory round the Muses' feet, like that which

> "Circled Una's angel face,
> And made a sunshine in the shady place."

The four greatest names in English poetry are almost the four first we come to: Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, and Milton. There are no others that can really be put in competition with these. The two last have had justice done them by the voice of common fame. Their names are blazoned in the very firmament of reputation; while the two first (though "the fault has been more in their stars than in themselves that they are underlings") either never emerged far above the horizon or were too soon involved in the obscurity of time.

In comparing these four writers together, it might be said that Chaucer excels as the poet of manners, or of real life; Spenser, as the poet of romance; Shakspeare as the poet of nature (in the largest use of the term); and Milton, as the poet of morality. Chaucer most frequently describes things as they are; Spenser, as we wish them to be; Shakspeare, as they would be; and Milton, as they ought to be. As poets, and as great poets, imagination, that is, the power of feigning things according to nature, was common to them all; but the principle or moving power to which this faculty was most subservient in Chaucer was habit or inveterate prejudice; in Spenser, novelty and the love of the marvellous; in

Shakspeare, it was the force of passion, combined with every variety of possible circumstances; and in Milton, [combined] only with the highest. The characteristic of Chaucer is intensity; of Spenser, remoteness; of Milton, elevation; of Shakspere, everything. It has been said by some critic, that Shakspeare was distinguished from the other dramatic writers of his day only by his wit; that they had all his other qualities but that; that one writer had as much sense, another as much fancy, another as much knowledge of character, another the same depth of passion, and another as great a power of language. This statement is not true; nor is the inference from it well founded, even if it were. This person does not seem to have been aware that, upon his own showing, the great distinction of Shakspeare's genius was its virtually including the genius of all the great men of his age, and not his differing from them in one accidental particular. But to have done with such minute and literal trifling.

The striking peculiarity of Shakspeare's mind was its generic quality, its power of communication with all other minds, so that it contained a universe of thought and feeling within itself, and had no one peculiar bias or exclusive excellence more than another. He was just like any other man, but that he was like all other men. He was the least of an egotist that it was possible to be. He was nothing in himself; but he was all that others were, or that they could become. He not only had in himself the germs of every faculty and feeling, but he could follow them by anticipation, intuitively, into all their conceivable ramifications, through every change of fortune or conflict of passion, or turn of thought. He had "a mind reflecting ages past" and present: all the people that ever lived are there. There was no respect of persons with him. His genius shone equally on the evil and on the good, on the wise and the foolish, the monarch and the beggar. "All corners of the earth, kings, queens, and states, maids, matrons, nay, the secrets of the grave," are hardly hid from his searching glance. He was like the genius of humanity, changing places with all of us at pleasure, and playing with our purposes as with his own. He turned the globe round for his amusement, and surveyed the generations of men, and the individuals as they passed, with their different concerns, passions, follies, vices, virtues, actions, and motives—as well those that they knew as those which they did not know, or acknowledge to themselves. The dreams of childhood, the ravings of despair, were the toys of his fancy. Airy beings waited at his call and came at his bidding. Harmless fairies "nodded to him, and did him courtesies;" and the night-hag bestrode the blast at the command of "his so potent

art." The world of spirits lay open to him, like the world of real men and women; and there is the same truth in his delineations of the one as of the other; for if the preternatural characters he describes could be supposed to exist, they would speak, and feel, and act as he makes them. He had only to think of anything in order to become that thing, with all the circumstances belonging to it. When he conceived of a character, whether real or imaginary, he not only entered into all its thoughts and feelings, but seemed instantly, and as if by touching a secret spring, to be surrounded with all the same objects, "subject to the same skyey influences," the same local, outward, and unforeseen accidents which would occur in reality. Thus the character of Caliban not only stands before us with a language and manners of its own, but the scenery and situation of the enchanted island he inhabits, the traditions of the place, its strange noises, its hidden recesses, "his frequent haunts and ancient neighbourhood," are given with a miraculous truth of nature, and with all the familiarity of an old recollection. The whole "coheres semblably together" in time, place, and circumstance. In reading this author, you do not merely learn what his characters say: you see their persons. By something expressed or understood, you are at no loss to decipher their peculiar physiognomy, the meaning of a look, the grouping, the by-play, as we might see it on the stage. A word, an epithet, paints a whole scene, or throws us back whole years in the history of the person represented. . . .

That which, perhaps, more than anything else distinguishes the dramatic productions of Shakspeare from all others is this wonderful truth and individuality of conception. Each of his characters is as much itself, and as absolutely independent of the rest as well as of the author, as if they were living persons, not fictions of the mind. The poet may be said, for the time, to identify himself with the character he wishes to represent, and to pass from one to another, like the same soul successively animating different bodies. By an art like that of the ventriloquist, he throws his imagination out of himself, and makes every word appear to proceed from the mouth of the person in whose name it is given. His plays alone are properly expressions of the passions, not descriptions of them. His characters are real beings of flesh and blood; they speak like men, not like authors. One might suppose that he had stood by at the time, and overheard what passed. As in our dreams we hold conversations with ourselves, make remarks, or communicate intelligence, and have no idea of the answer which we shall receive, and which we ourselves make, till we hear it: so the dialogues in Shakspeare are carried on without any consciousness of what is to follow,

without any appearance of preparation or premeditation. The gusts of passion come and go like sounds of music borne on the wind. Nothing is made out by formal inference and analogy, by climax and antithesis: all comes, or seems to come, immediately from nature. Each object and circumstance exists in his mind, as it would have existed in reality: each several train of thought and feeling goes on of itself, without confusion or effort. In the world of his imagination everything has a life, a place and being of its own! . . .

Shakspeare's imagination is of the same plastic kind as his conception of character or passion. "It glances from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven." Its movement is rapid and devious. It unites the most opposite extremes; or, as Puck says, in boasting of his own feats, "puts a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes." He seems always hurrying from his subject, even while describing it; but the stroke, like the lightning's, is sure as it is sudden. He takes the widest possible range, but from that very range he has his choice of the greatest variety and aptitude of materials. He brings together images the most alike, but placed at the greatest distance from each other; that is, found in circumstances of the greatest dissimilitude. From the remoteness of his combinations, and the celerity with which they are effected, they coalesce the more indissolubly together. The more the thoughts are strangers to each other, and the longer they have been kept asunder, the more intimate does their union seem to become. Their felicity is equal to their force. Their likeness is made more dazzling by their novelty. They startle, and take the fancy prisoner in the same instant. . . .

Shakspeare's language and versification are like the rest of him. He has a magic power over words; they come winged at his bidding, and seem to know their places. They are struck out at a heat on the spur of the occasion, and have all the truth and vividness which arise from an actual impression of the objects. His epithets and single phrases are like sparkles, thrown off from an imagination fired by the whirling rapidity of its own motion. His language is hieroglyphical. It translates thoughts into visible images. It abounds in sudden transitions and elliptical expressions. This is the source of his mixed metaphors, which are only abbreviated forms of speech. These, however, give no pain from long custom. They have, in fact, become idioms in the language. They are the building, and not the scaffolding to thought. We take the meaning and effect of a well-known passage entire, and no more stop to scan and spell out the particular words and phrases than the syllables of which they are

composed. In trying to recollect any other author, one sometimes stumbles, in case of failure, on a word as good. In Shakspeare, any other word but the true one is sure to be wrong. If anybody, for instance, could not recollect the words of the following description—

> ——"Light thickens, and the crow
> Makes wing to the rooky wood,"

he would be greatly at a loss to substitute others for them equally expressive of the feeling. . . .

Shakspeare discovers in his writings little religious enthusiasm, and an indifference to personal reputation: he had none of the bigotry of his age; and his political prejudices were not very strong. In these respects, as well as in every other, he formed a direct contrast to Milton. Milton's works are a perpetual invocation to the Muses, a hymn to Fame. He had his thoughts constantly fixed on the contemplation of the Hebrew theocracy, and of a perfect commonwealth; and he seized the pen with a hand just warm from the touch of the ark of faith. His religious zeal infused its character into his imagination; so that he devotes himself with the same sense of duty to the cultivation of his genius as he did to the exercise of virtue or the good of his country. The spirit of the poet, the patriot, and the prophet vied with each other in his breast. His mind appears to have held equal communion with the inspired writers, and with the bards and sages of ancient Greece and Rome:

> "Blind Thamyris, and blind Mæonides,
> And Tiresias, and Phineus, prophets old."

He had a high standard with which he was always comparing himself, nothing short of which could satisfy his jealous ambition. He thought of nobler forms and nobler things than those he found about him. He lived apart in the solitude of his own thoughts, carefully excluding from his mind whatever might distract its purposes, or alloy its purity, or damp its zeal. "With darkness and with dangers compassed round," he had the mighty models of antiquity always present to his thoughts, and determined to raise a monument of equal height and glory, "piling up every stone of lustre from the brook," for the delight and wonder of posterity. He had girded himself up, and, as it were, sanctified his genius to this service from his youth. "For after," he says, "I had from my first years, by the ceaseless diligence and care of my father, been exercised to the tongues, and some sciences as my age could suffer,

by sundry masters and teachers, it was found that whether aught was imposed upon me by them, or betaken to of my own choice, the style, by certain vital signs it had, was likely to live; but much latelier, in the private academies of Italy, perceiving that some trifles which I had in memory, composed at under twenty or thereabout, met with acceptance above what was looked for, I began thus far to assent both to them and divers of my friends here at home, and not less to an inward prompting which now grew daily upon me, that by labour and intense study (which I take to be my portion in this life), joined with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to after-times as they should not willingly let it die. The accomplishment of these intentions, which have lived within me ever since I could conceive myself anything worth to my country, lies not but in a power above man's to promise; but that none hath by more studious ways endeavoured, and with more unwearied spirit that none shall, that I dare almost aver of myself, as far as life and free leisure will extend. Neither do I think it shame to covenant with any knowing reader, that for some few years yet I may go on trust with him toward the payment of what I am now indebted, as being a work not to be raised from the heat of youth or the vapours of wine: like that which flows at waste from the pen of some vulgar amourist, or the trencher fury of a rhyming parasite, nor to be obtained by the invocation of Dame Memory and her Siren daughters, but by devout prayer to that eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out His Seraphim with the hallowed fire of His altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom He pleases: to this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, and insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs. Although it nothing content me to have disclosed thus much beforehand; but that I trust hereby to make it manifest with what small willingness I endure to interrupt the pursuit of no less hopes than these, and leave a calm and pleasing solitariness, fed with cheerful and confident thoughts, to embark in a troubled sea of noises and hoarse disputes, from beholding the bright countenance of truth in the quiet and still air of delightful studies."

So that of Spenser:

> "The noble heart that harbours virtuous thought,
> And is with child of glorious great intent,
> Can never rest until it forth have brought
> The eternal brood of glory excellent."

Milton, therefore, did not write from casual impulse, but after a severe examination of his own strength, and with resolution to

leave nothing undone which it was in his power to do. He always labours, and almost always succeeds. He strives hard to say the finest things in the world, and he does say them. He adorns and dignifies his subject to the utmost: he surrounds it with every possible association of beauty or grandeur, whether moral, intellectual, or physical. He refines on his descriptions of beauty, loading sweets on sweets, till the sense aches at them, and raises his images of terror to a gigantic elevation, that "makes Ossa like a wart." In Milton, there is always an appearance of effort: in Shakspeare, scarcely any. . . .

Milton's blank verse is the only blank verse in the language (except Shakspeare's) that deserves the name of verse. Dr. Johnson, who had modelled his ideas of versification on the regular sing-song of Pope, condemns the "Paradise Lost" as harsh and unequal. I shall not pretend to say that this is not sometimes the case; for where a degree of excellence beyond the mechanical rules of art is attempted, the poet must sometimes fail. But I imagine that there are more perfect examples in Milton of musical expression, or of an adaptation of the sound and movement of the verse to the meaning of the passage, than in all our other writers, whether of rhyme or blank verse, put together (with the exception already mentioned). Spenser is the most harmonious of our stanza-writers, as Dryden is the most sounding and varied of our rhymists. But in neither is there anything like the same ear for music, the same power of approximating the varieties of poetical to those of musical rhythm, as there is in our great epic poet. The sound of his lines is moulded into the expression of the sentiment, almost of the very image. They rise or fall, pause or hurry rapidly on, with exquisite art, but without the least trick or affectation, as the occasion seems to require.

MILTON'S CHARACTER OF "SATAN."

Satan is the most heroic subject that ever was chosen for a poem; and the execution is as perfect as the design is lofty. He was the first of created beings who, for endeavouring to be equal with the highest, and to divide the empire of heaven with the Almighty, was hurled down to hell. His aim was no less than the throne of the universe; his means, myriads of angelic armies bright, the third part of the heavens, whom he lured after him with his countenance, and who durst defy the Omnipotent in arms. His ambition was the greatest, and his punishment was the greatest; but not so his despair: for his fortitude was as great as his sufferings. His

strength of mind was matchless as his strength of body; the vastness of his designs did not surpass the firm, inflexible determination with which he submitted to his irreversible doom and final loss of all good. His power of action and of suffering was equal. He was the greatest power that was ever overthrown, with the strongest will left to resist or to endure. He was baffled, not confounded. He stood like a tower; or

> ——————"As when heaven's fire
> Hath scathed the forest oaks or mountain pines."

He was still surrounded with hosts of rebel angels, armed warriors, who own him as their sovereign leader, and with whose fate he sympathises as he views them round, far as the eye can reach; though he keeps aloof from them in his own mind, and holds supreme counsel only with his own breast. An outcast from heaven, hell trembles beneath his feet, Sin and Death are at his heels, and mankind are his easy prey:

> "All is not lost; th' unconquerable will,
> And study of revenge, immortal hate,
> And courage never to submit or yield,
> And what else is not to be overcome,"

are still his. The sense of his punishment seems lost in the magnitude of it; the fierceness of tormenting flames is qualified and made innoxious by the greater fierceness of his pride; the loss of infinite happiness to himself is compensated in thought by the power of inflicting infinite misery on others. Yet Satan is not the principle of malignity, or of the abstract love of evil, but of the abstract love of power, of pride, of self-will personified, to which last principle all other good and evil, and even his own, are subordinate. From this principle he never once flinches. His love of power and contempt for suffering are never once relaxed from the highest pitch of intensity. His thoughts burn like a hell within him; but the power of thought holds dominion in his mind over every other consideration. The consciousness of a determined purpose, of "that intellectual being, those thoughts that wander through eternity, though accompanied with endless pain, he prefers to nonentity, to "being swallowed up and lost in the wide womb of uncreated night." He expresses the sum and substance of all ambition in one line: "Fallen cherub, to be weak as miserable, doing or suffering!" After such a conflict as his and such a defeat, to retreat in order, to rally, to make terms, to exist at all, is something; but he does more than this: he founds a new empire in hell, and from it conquers this

new world, whither he bends his undaunted flight, forcing his way through nether and surrounding fires. The poet has not in all this given us a mere shadowy outline; the strength is equal to the magnitude of the conception. The Achilles of Homer is not more distinct; the Titans were not more vast; Prometheus chained to his rock was not a more terrific example of suffering and of crime. Wherever the figure of Satan is introduced, whether he walks or flies, "rising aloft incumbent on the dusky air," it is illustrated with the most striking and appropriate images: so that we see it always before us, gigantic, irregular, portentous, uneasy, and disturbed; but dazzling in its faded splendour, the clouded ruins of a god. The deformity of Satan is only in the depravity of his will; he has no bodily deformity to excite our loathing or disgust. The horns and tail are not there, poor emblems of the unbending, unconquered spirit, of the writhing agonies within. Milton was too magnanimous and open an antagonist to support his argument by the by-tricks of a hump and cloven foot, to bring into the fair field of controversy the good old catholic prejudices of which Tasso and Dante have availed themselves, and which the mystic German critics would restore. He relied on the justice of his cause, and did not scruple to give the devil his due. Some persons may think that he has carried his liberality too far, and injured the cause he professed to espouse by making him the chief person in his poem. Considering the nature of his subject, he would be equally in danger of running into this fault, from his faith in religion and his love of rebellion; and perhaps each of these motives had its full share in determining the choice of his subject.

DRYDEN AND POPE.

The question, whether Pope was a poet, has hardly yet been settled, and is hardly worth settling; for if he was not a great poet, he must have been a great prose-writer; that is, he was a great writer of some sort. He was a man of exquisite faculties, and of the most refined taste; and as he chose verse (the most obvious distinction of poetry) as the vehicle to express his ideas, he has generally passed for a poet, and a good one. If indeed by a great poet we mean one who gives the utmost grandeur to our conceptions of nature, or the utmost force to the passions of the heart, Pope was not in this sense a great poet; for the bent, the characteristic power of his mind, lay the clean contrary way; namely, in representing things as they appear to the indifferent observer, stripped of prejudice and passion, as in his "Critical Essays;" or in representing them in the most

contemptible and insignificant point of view, as in his "Satires;" or in clothing the little with mock-dignity, as in his poems of "Fancy;" or in adorning the trivial incidents and familiar relations of life with the utmost elegance of expression and all the flattering illusions of friendship or self-love, as in his "Epistles." He was not, then, distinguished as a poet of lofty enthusiasm, of strong imagination, with a passionate sense of the beauties of nature, or a deep insight into the workings of the heart; but he was a wit and a critic, a man of sense, of observation, and the world, with a keen relish for the elegances of art, or of nature when embellished by art, a quick tact for propriety of thought and manners as established by the forms and customs of society, a refined sympathy with the sentiments and habitudes of human life, as he felt them within the little circle of his family and friends. He was, in a word, the poet, not of nature, but of art; and the distinction between the two, as well as I can make it out, is this. The poet of nature is one who, from the elements of beauty, of power, and of passion in his own breast, sympathises with whatever is beautiful, and grand, and impassioned in nature, in its simple majesty, in its immediate appeal to the senses, to the thoughts and hearts of all men; so that the poet of nature, by the truth, and depth, and harmony of his mind, may be said to hold communion with the very soul of nature; to be identified with, and to foreknow, and to record the feelings of all men at all times and places, as they are liable to the same impressions, and to exert the same power over the minds of his readers that nature does. He sees things in their eternal beauty, for he sees them as they are; he feels them in their universal interest, for he feels them as they affect the first principles of his and our common nature. Such was Homer, such was Shakspeare, whose works will last as long as nature, because they are a copy of the indestructible forms and everlasting impulses of nature, welling out from the bosom as from a perennial spring, or stamped upon the senses by the hand of their Maker. The power of the imagination in them is the representative power of all nature. It has its centre in the human soul, and makes the circuit of the universe.

Pope was not assuredly a poet of this class, or in the first rank of it. He saw nature only dressed by art; he judged of beauty by fashion; he sought for truth in the opinions of the world; he judged of the feelings of others by his own. The capacious soul of Shakspeare had an intuitive and mighty sympathy with whatever could enter into the heart of man in all possible circumstances: Pope had an exact knowledge of all that he himself loved or hated, wished or wanted. Milton has winged his daring flight from heaven to earth,

through Chaos and old Night. Pope's Muse never wandered with safety but from his library to his grotto, or from his grotto into his library back again. His mind dwelt with greater pleasure on his own garden than on the garden of Eden; he could describe the fautless whole-length mirror that reflected his own person better than the smooth surface of the lake that reflects the face of heaven, a piece of cut-glass or a pair of paste buckles with more brilliance and effect than a thousand dew-drops glittering in the sun. He would be more delighted with a patent lamp than with "the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow," that fills the skies with its soft, silent lustre, that trembles through the cottage-window, and cheers the watchful mariner on the lonely wave. In short, he was the poet of personality and of polished life. That which was nearest to him was the greatest: the fashion of the day bore sway in his mind over the immutable laws of nature. He preferred the artificial to the natural in external objects, because he had a stronger fellow-feeling with the self-love of the maker or proprietor of a gewgaw than admiration of that which was interesting to all mankind. He preferred the artificial to the natural in passion, because the involuntary and uncalculating impulses of the one hurried him away with a force and vehemence with which he could not grapple; while he could trifle with the conventional and superficial modifications of mere sentiment at will, laugh at or admire, put them on or off like a masquerade dress, make much or little of them, indulge them for a longer or a shorter time, as he pleased; and because, while they amused his fancy and exercised his ingenuity, they never once disturbed his vanity, his levity or indifference. His mind was the antithesis of strength and grandeur; its power was the power of indifference. He had none of the enthusiasm of poetry; he was in poetry what the sceptic is in religion. . . .

His Muse was on a peace-establishment, and grew somewhat effeminate by long ease and indulgence. He lived in the smiles of fortune, and basked in the favour of the great. In his smooth and polished verse we meet with no prodigies of nature, but with miracles of wit; the thunders of his pen are whispered flatteries; its forked lightnings, pointed sarcasms; for "the gnarled oak" he gives us "the soft myrtle:" for rocks, and seas, and mountains, artificial grass-plots, gravel-walks, and tinkling rills: for earthquakes and tempests, the breaking of a flower-pot or the fall of a china-jar: for the tug and war of the elements or the deadly strife of the passions we have

"Calm contemplation and poetic ease."

Yet within this retired and narrow circle how much, and that how exquisite, was contained! What discrimination, what wit, what delicacy, what fancy, what lurking spleen, what elegance of thought, what pampered refinement of sentiment! It is like looking at the world through a microscope, where everything assumes a new character and a new consequence, where things are seen in their minutest circumstances and slightest shades of difference; where the little becomes gigantic, the deformed beautiful, and the beautiful deformed. The wrong end of the magnifier is, to be sure, held to everything; but still the exhibition is highly curious, and we know not whether to be most pleased or surprised. Such, at least, is the best account I am able to give of this extraordinary man, without doing injustice to him or others. It is time to refer to particular instances in his works. . . .

Dryden was a better prose-writer, and a bolder and more varied versifier than Pope. He was a more vigorous thinker, a more correct and logical declaimer, and had more of what may be called strength of mind than Pope; but he had not the same refinement and delicacy of feeling. Dryden's eloquence and spirit were possessed in a higher degree by others, and in nearly the same degree by Pope himself; but that by which Pope was distinguished was an essence which he alone possessed, and of incomparable value on that sole account. Dryden's "Epistles" are excellent, but inferior to Pope's, though they appear (particularly the admirable one to Congreve) to have been the model on which the latter formed his. His "Satires" are better than Pope's. His "Absalom and Achitophel" is superior, both in force of invective and discrimination of character, to anything of Pope's in the same way. The character of Achitophel is very fine, and breathes, if not a sincere love for virtue, a strong spirit of indignation against vice.

MacFlecknoe is the origin of the idea of the "Dunciad;" but it is less elaborately constructed, less feeble, and less heavy. The difference between Pope's satirical portraits and Dryden's appears to be this in a good measure, that Dryden seems to grapple with his antagonists, and to describe real persons; Pope seems to refine upon them in his own mind, and to make them out just what he pleases, till they are not real characters, but the mere drivelling effusions of his spleen and malice. Pope describes the thing, and then goes on describing his own description, till he loses himself in verbal repetitions. Dryden recurs to the object often, takes fresh sittings of nature, and gives us new strokes of character as well as of his pencil. The "Hind and Panther" is an allegory as well as a satire, and so far it tells less home; the battery is not so point-blank. But otherwise

it has more genius, vehemence, and strength of description than any other of Dryden's works, not excepting the "Absalom and Achitophel." It also contains the finest examples of varied and sounding versification. . . .

He has left the best character of Shakspeare that has ever been written:—"To begin, then, with Shakspeare: he was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient, poets had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily: when he describes anything you more than see it—you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read Nature; he looked inwards and found her there. I cannot say he is everywhere alike; were he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of mankind. He is many times flat and insipid; his comic wit degenerating into clenches, his serious swelling into bombast. But he is always great, when some great occasion is presented to him. . . .

WITHER.

WITHER is a name now almost forgotten, and his works seldom read; but his poetry is not infrequently distinguished by a tender and pastoral turn of thought; and there is one passage of exquisite feeling, describing the consolations of poetry in the following terms:

"She doth tell me where to borrow
Comfort in the midst of sorrow;
Makes the desolatest place
To her presence be a grace;
And the blackest discontents
Be her fairest ornaments.
In my former days of bliss
Her divine skill taught me this,
That from everything I saw,
I could some invention draw;
And raise pleasure to her height,
Through the meanest object's sight,
By the murmur of a spring,
Or the least bough's rusteling,
By a daisy whose leaves spread,
Shut when Titan goes to bed;
Or a shady bush or tree,
She could more infuse in me,
Than all Nature's beauties can
In some other wiser man.

By her help I also now
Make this churlish place allow
Some things that may sweeten gladness
In the very gall of sadness.
The dull loneness, the black shade,
That these hanging vaults have made:
The strange music of the waves,
Beating on these hollow caves:
This black den which rocks emboss,
Overgrown with eldest moss:
The rude portals that give light
More to terror than delight:
This my chamber of neglect,
Wall'd about with disrespect:
From all these and this dull air
A fit object for despair,
She hath taught me by her might
To draw comfort and delight.
Therefore, thou best earthly bliss,
I will cherish thee for this.
Poesie, thou sweet'st content
That e'er Heav'n to mortals lent:
Though they as a trifle leave thee,
Whose dull thoughts cannot conceive thee:
Though thou be to them a scorn,
That to nought but earth are born:
Let my life no longer be
Than I am in love with thee.
Though our wise ones call thee madness,
Let me never taste of sadness,
If I love not thy maddest fits,
Above all their greatest wits.
And though some too seeming holy,
Do account thy raptures folly,
Thou dost teach me to contemn
What makes knaves and fools of them.

THOMSON AND COWPER.

All that is admirable in Thomson's poem, "The Seasons," is the emanation of a fine natural genius and sincere love of his subject, unforced, unstudied, that comes uncalled for and departs unbidden. But he takes no pains, uses no self-correction; or if he seems to labour, it is worse than labour lost. His genius "cannot be constrained by mastery." The feeling of nature, of the changes of the seasons, was in his mind; and he could not help conveying this feeling to the reader by the mere force of spontaneous expression; but if the expression did not come of itself, he left the whole busi-

ness to chance; or, willing to evade instead of encountering the difficulties of his subject, fills up the intervals of true inspiration with the most vapid and worthless materials, pieces out a beautiful half-line with a bombastic allusion, or overloads an exquisitely natural sentiment or image with a cloud of painted, pompous, cumbrous phrases, like the shower of roses in which he represents the Spring, his own lovely, fresh, and innocent Spring, as descending to the earth:

> "Come, gentle Spring! ethereal Mildness! come,
> And from the bosom of yon dropping cloud,
> While music wakes around, veil'd in a shower
> Of shadowing roses, on our plains descend."

Who, from such a flimsy, round-about, unmeaning commencement as this, would expect the delightful, unexaggerated, home-felt descriptions of natural scenery which are scattered in such unconscious profusion through this and the following cantos? For instance, the very next passage is crowded with a set of striking images:

> "And see where surly Winter passes off
> Far to the north, and calls his ruffian blasts:
> His blasts obey, and quit the howling hill,
> The shatter'd forest, and the ravag'd vale;
> While softer gales succeed, at whose kind touch
> Dissolving snows in livid torrents lost,
> The mountains lift their green heads to the sky.
> As yet the trembling year is unconfirmed,
> And Winter oft at eve resumes the breeze,
> Chills the pale morn, and bids his driving sleets
> Deform the day delightless; so that scarce
> The bittern knows his time with bill ingulpht
> To shake the sounding marsh, or from the shore
> The plovers when to scatter o'er the heath,
> And sing their wild notes to the list'ning waste."

Thomson is the best of our descriptive poets; for he gives most of the poetry of natural description. Others have been quite equal to him, or have surpassed him, as Cowper, for instance, in the picturesque part of his art, in marking the peculiar features and curious details of objects; no one has yet come up to him in giving the sum-total of their effects, their varying influences on the mind. He does not go into the minutiæ of a landscape, but describes the vivid impression which the whole makes upon his own imagination, and thus transfers the same unbroken, unimpaired impression to the imagination of his readers. The colours with which he paints seem yet wet and breathing, like those of the living statue in the "Winter's Tale."

Nature in his descriptions is seen growing around us, fresh and lusty as in itself. We feel the effect of the atmosphere, its humidity or clearness, its heat or cold, the glow of summer, the gloom of winter, the tender promise of the spring, the full overshadowing foliage, the declining pomp and deepening tints of autumn. He transports us to the scorching heat of vertical suns, or plunges us into the chilling horrors and desolation of the frozen zone. We hear the snow drifting against the broken casement without, and see the fire blazing on the hearth within. The first scattered drops of a vernal shower patter on the leaves above our heads, or the coming storm resounds through the leafless groves. In a word, he describes not to the eye alone, but to the other senses, and to the whole man. He puts his heart into his subject, writes as he feels, and humanises whatever he touches. He makes all his descriptions teem with life and vivifying soul. His faults were those of his style —of the author and the man; but the original genius of the poet, the pith and marrow of his imagination, the fine natural mould in which his feelings were bedded, were too much for him to counteract by neglect, or affectation, or false ornaments. It is for this reason that he is, perhaps, the most popular of all our poets, treating of a subject that all can understand, and in a way that is interesting to all alike, to the ignorant or the refined, because he gives back the impression which the things themselves make upon us in nature. "That," said a man of genius, seeing a little shabby, soiled copy of Thomson's "Seasons" lying on the window-seat of an obscure country alehouse, "That is true fame!" . . .

Cowper, whom I shall speak of in this connection, lived at a considerable distance of time after Thomson, and had some advantages over him, particularly in simplicity of style, in a certain precision and minuteness of graphical description, and in a more careful and leisurely choice of such topics only as his genius and peculiar habits of mind prompted him to treat of. The "Task" has fewer blemishes than the "Seasons;" but it has not the same capital excellence, the "unbought grace" of poetry, the power of moving and infusing the warmth of the author's mind into that of the reader. If Cowper had a mere polished taste, Thomson had beyond comparison a more fertile genius, more impulsive force, a more entire forgetfulness of himself in his subject. If in Thomson you are sometimes offended with the slovenliness of the author by profession, determined to get through his task at all events, in Cowper you are no less dissatisfied with the finicalness of the private gentleman, who does not care whether he completes his work or not, and in whatever he does is evidently more solicitous to please himself than the public.

There is an effeminacy about him which shrinks from and repels common and hearty sympathy. With all his boasted simplicity and love of the country, he seldom launches out into general descriptions of nature; he looks at her over his clipped hedges and from his well-swept garden-walks; or if he makes a bolder experiment now and then, it is with an air of precaution, as if he were afraid of being caught in a shower of rain, or of not being able, in case of any untoward accident, to make good his retreat home. He shakes hands with nature with a pair of fashionable gloves on, and leads "his Vashti" forth to public view with a look of consciousness and attention to etiquette, as a fine gentleman hands a lady out to dance a minuet. He is delicate to fastidiousness, and glad to get back, after a romantic adventure with crazy Kate, a party of gipsies, or a little child on a common, to the drawing-room and the ladies again, to the sofa and the tea-kettle—no, I beg his pardon, not to the singing, well-scoured tea-kettle, but to the polished and loud-hissing urn. His walks and arbours are kept clear of worms and snails with as much an appearance of *petit-maîtreship* as of humanity. He has some of the sickly sensibility and pampered refinements of Pope; but then Pope prided himself in them; whereas Cowper affects to be all simplicity and plainness. He had neither Thomson's love of the unadorned beauties of nature nor Pope's exquisite sense of the elegances of art. He was, in fact, a nervous man, afraid of trusting himself to the seductions of the one, and ashamed of putting forward his pretensions to an intimacy with the other; but to be a coward is not the way to succeed either in poetry, in war, or in love! Still he is a genuine poet, and deserves all his reputation. His worst vices are amiable weaknesses, elegant trifling. Though there is a frequent dryness, timidity, and *jejuneness* in his manner, he has left a number of pictures of domestic comfort and social refinement, as well as of natural imagery and feeling, which can hardly be forgotten but with the language itself. Such, among others, are his memorable description of the post coming in, that of the preparations for tea on a winter's evening in the country, of the unexpected fall of snow, of the frosty morning (with the fine satirical transition to the Empress of Russia's palace of ice), and, most of all, the winter's walk at noon. Every one of these may be considered as distinct studies, or highly-finished cabinet pieces, arranged without order or coherence. . . .

SWIFT.

SWIFT's reputation as a poet has been in a manner obscured by the greater splendour, by the natural force and inventive genius of his prose writings; but if he had never written either the "Tale of a "Tub" or "Gulliver's Travels," his name merely as a poet would have come down to us, and have gone down to posterity with well-earned honours. His "Imitations of Horace," and still more his Verses on his own Death, place him in the first rank of agreeable moralists in verse. There is not only a dry humour, an exquisite tone of irony, in these productions of his pen, but there is a touching, unpretending pathos, mixed up with the most whimsical and eccentric strokes of pleasantry and satire. His "Description of the Morning in London," and of a "City Shower," which were first published in the *Tatler*, are among the most delightful of the contents of that very delightful work. Swift shone as one of the most sensible of the poets; he is also distinguished as one of the most nonsensical of them. No man has written so many lackadaisical, slipshod, tedious, trifling, foolish, fantastical verses as he, which are so little an imputation on the wisdom of the writer, and which, in fact, only show his readiness to oblige others and to forget himself. He has gone so far as to invent a new stanza of fourteen and sixteen syllable lines for Mary the cookmaid to vent her budget of nothings, and for Mrs. Harris to gossip with the deaf old housekeeper. Oh, when shall we have such another Rector of Laracor? The "Tale of a Tub" is one of the most masterly compositions in the language, whether for thought, wit, or style. It is so capital and undeniable a proof of the author's talents, that Dr. Johnson, who did not like Swift, would not allow that he wrote it. It is hard that the same performance should stand in the way of a man's promotion to a bishopric, as wanting gravity, and at the same time be denied to be his, as having too much wit. It is a pity the Doctor did not find out some graver author, for whom he felt a critical kindness, on whom to father this splendid but unacknowledged production. Dr. Johnson could not deny that "Gulliver's Travels" were his; he therefore disputed their merits, and said that, after the first idea of them was conceived, they were easy to execute; all the rest followed mechanically. I do not know how that may be; but the mechanism employed is something very different from any that the author of "Rasselas" was in the habit of bringing to bear on such occasions. There is nothing more futile, as well as invidious, than

this mode of criticising a work of original genius. Its greatest merit is supposed to be in the invention; and you say very wisely, that it is not *in the execution*. You might as well take away the merit of the invention of the telescope by saying that, after its uses were explained and understood, any ordinary eyesight could look through it. Whether the excellence of "Gulliver's Travels" is in the conception or the execution is of little consequence; the power is somewhere, and it is a power that has moved the world. The power is not that of big words and vaunting commonplaces. Swift left these to those who wanted them, and has done what his acuteness and intensity of mind alone could enable any one to conceive or to perform. His object was to strip empty pride and grandeur of the imposing air which external circumstances throw around them; and for this purpose he has cheated the imagination of the illusions which the prejudices of sense and of the world put upon it, by reducing everything to the abstract predicament of size. He enlarges or diminishes the scale, as he wishes to show the insignificance or the grossness of our overweening self-love. That he has done this with mathematical precision, with complete presence of mind, and perfect keeping, in a manner that comes equally home to the understanding of the man and of the child, does not take away from the merit of the work or the genius of the author. He has taken a new view of human nature, such as a being of a higher sphere might take of it; he has torn the scales from off his moral vision; he has tried an experiment upon human life, and sifted its pretensions from the alloy of circumstances; he has measured it with a rule, has weighed it in a balance, and found it, for the most part, wanting and worthless—in substance and in show. Nothing solid, nothing valuable is left in his system but virtue and wisdom. What a libel is this upon mankind! What a convincing proof of misanthropy! What presumption and what *malice prepense*, to show men what they are, and to teach them what they ought to be! What a mortifying stroke aimed at national glory is that unlucky incident of Gulliver's wading across the channel and carrying off the whole fleet of Blefuscu! After that, we have only to consider which of the contending parties was in the right. What a shock to personal vanity is given in the account of Gulliver's nurse, Glumdalclitch! Still, notwithstanding the disparagement to her personal charms, her good-nature remains the same amiable quality as before. I cannot see the harm, the misanthropy, the immoral and degrading tendency of this. The moral lesson is as fine as the intellectual exhibition is amusing. It is an attempt to tear off the mask of imposture from the world; and nothing but imposture has a right to

complain of it. It is, indeed, the way with our quacks in morality to preach up the dignity of human nature, to pamper pride and hypocrisy with the idle mockeries of the virtues they pretend to, and which they have not; but it was not Swift's way to cant morality or anything else; nor did his genius prompt him to write unmeaning panegyrics on mankind! . . .

SWIFT—RABELAIS—VOLTAIRE.

Swift was not a Frenchman. In this respect he differed from Rabelais and Voltaire. They have been accounted the three greatest wits in modern times; but their wit was of a peculiar kind in each. They are little beholden to each other; there is some resemblance between Lord Peter in the "Tale of a Tub" and Rabelais' Friar John; but in general they are all three authors of a substantive character in themselves. Swift's wit (particularly in his chief prose works) was serious, saturnine, and practical; Rabelais' was fantastical and joyous; Voltaire's was light, sportive, and verbal. Swift's wit was the wit of sense; Rabelais', the wit of nonsense; Voltaire's, of indifference to both. The ludicrous in Swift arises out of his keen sense of impropriety, his soreness and impatience of the least absurdity. He separates with a severe and caustic air truth from falsehood, folly from wisdom, "shows vice her own image, scorn her own feature;" and it is the force, the precision, and the honest abruptness with which the separation is made that excites our surprise, our admiration, and laughter. He sets a mark of reprobation on that which offends good sense and good manners which cannot be mistaken, and which holds it up to our ridicule and contempt ever after. His occasional disposition to trifling (already noticed) was a relaxation from the excessive earnestness of his mind. *Indignatio facit versus.* His better genius was his spleen. It was the biting acrimony of his temper that sharpened his other faculties. The truth of his perceptions produced the pointed coruscations of his wit; his playful irony was the result of inward bitterness of thought; his imagination was the product of the literal, dry, incorrigible tenaciousness of his understanding. He endeavoured to escape from the persecution of realities into the regions of fancy, and invented his Liliputians and Brobdignagians, Yahoos and Houynhyms, as a diversion to the more painful knowledge of the world around him: *they* only made him laugh, while men and women made him angry. His feverish impatience made him view the infirmities of that great baby, the world, with the same scrutinising glance and jealous

irritability that a parent regards the failings of its offspring; but, as Rousseau has well observed, parents have not on this account been supposed to have more affection for other people's children than their own. In other respects, and except from the sparkling effervescence of his gall, Swift's brain was as "dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage." He hated absurdity: Rabelais loved it, exaggerated it with supreme satisfaction, luxuriated in its endless varieties, rioted in nonsense, "reigned there and revelled." He dwelt on the absurd and ridiculous for the pleasure they gave him, not for the pain. He lived upon laughter, and died laughing. He indulged his vein, and took his full swing of folly. He did not balk his fancy or his readers. His wit was to him "as riches fineless;" he saw no end of his wealth in that way, and set no limits to his extravagance: he was communicative, prodigal, boundless, and inexhaustible. His were the Saturnalia of wit, the riches and the royalty, the health and long life. He is intoxicated with gaiety, mad with folly. His animal spirits drown him in a flood of mirth: his blood courses up and down his veins like wine. His thirst of enjoyment is as great as his thirst of drink: his appetite for good things of all sorts is unsatisfied, and there is a never-ending supply. *Discourse is dry;* so they moisten their words in their cups, and relish their dry jests with plenty of Botargos and dried neats'-tongues. It is like Camacho's wedding in "Don Quixote," where Sancho ladled out whole pullets and fat geese from the soup-kettles at a pull. The flagons are set a-running, their tongues wag at the same time, and their mirth flows as a river. How Friar John roars and lays about him in the vineyard! How Panurge whines in the storm, and how dexterously he contrives to throw the sheep overboard! How much Pantagruel behaves like a wise king! How Gargantua mewls, and pules, and slabbers his nurse, and demeans himself most like a royal infant! what provinces he devours! what seas he drinks up! How he eats, drinks, and sleeps—sleeps, eats, and drinks! The style of Rabelais is no less prodigious than his matter. His words are of marrow—unctuous, dropping fatness. He was a mad wag, the king of good fellows, and prince of practical philosophers!

Rabelais was a Frenchman of the old school, Voltaire of the new. The wit of the one arose from an exuberance of enjoyment; of the other, from an excess of indifference, real or assumed. Voltaire had no enthusiasm for one thing or another: he made light of everything. In his hands all things turn to chaff and dross, as the pieces of silver money in the "Arabian Nights" were changed by the hands of the enchanter into little dry crumbling leaves! He is a Parisian. He never exaggerates, is never violent: he treats things with the most

provoking *sang-froid*, and expresses his contempt by the most indirect hints and in the fewest words, as if he hardly thought them worth even his contempt. He retains complete possession of himself and of his subject. He does not effect his purpose by the eagerness of his blows, but by the delicacy of his tact. The poisoned wound he inflicted was so fine as scarcely to be felt till it rankled and festered in its "mortal consequences." His callousness was an excellent foil for the antagonists he had mostly to deal with. He took knaves and fools on his shield well. He stole away its cloak from grave imposture. If he reduced other things below their true value, making them seem worthless and hollow, he did not degrade the pretensions of tyranny and superstition below their true value, by making them seem utterly worthless and hollow, as contemptible as they were odious. This was the service he rendered to truth and mankind! His "Candide" is a masterpiece of wit. It has been called "the dull product of a scoffer's pen." It is, indeed, "the product of a scoffer's pen;" but after reading the "Excursion," few people will think it *dull*. It is in the most perfect keeping, and without any appearance of effort. Every sentence tells, and the whole reads like one sentence. . . .

GRAY.

GRAY'S "Elegy in a Country Churchyard" is one of the most classical productions that ever was penned by a refined and thoughtful mind, moralising on human life. The ode on a "Distant Prospect of Eton College" is more mechanical and commonplace; but it touches on certain strings about the heart, that vibrate in unison with it to our latest breath. No one ever passes by Windsor's "stately heights," or sees the distant spires of Eton College below, without thinking of Gray. He deserves that we should think of him; for he thought of others, and turned a trembling, ever-watchful ear to "the still sad music of humanity." His Letters are inimitably fine. If his poems are sometimes finical and pedantic, his prose is quite free from affectation. He pours his thoughts out upon paper as they arise in his mind; and they arise in his mind without pretence or constraint, from the pure impulse of learned leisure and contemplative indolence. He is not here on stilts or in buckram, but smiles in his easy-chair, as he moralises through the loopholes of retreat, on the bustle and raree-show of the world, or on "those reverend bedlams, colleges and schools!" He had nothing to do but to read and to think, and to tell his friends what he read and thought. His life was a luxurious, thoughtful dream. "Be mine," he says in one of his Letters, "to read eternal

new romances of Marivaux and Crebillon." And in another, to show his contempt for action and the turmoils of ambition, he says to some one, "Don't you remember Lords —— and ——, who are now great statesmen, little dirty boys playing at cricket? For my part, I do not feel a bit wiser, or bigger or older, than I did then." What an equivalent for not being wise or great, to be always young! What a happiness never to lose or gain anything in the game of human life, by being never anything more than a looker-on!

GOLDSMITH.

THE principal name of the period we are now come to is that of Goldsmith, than which few names stand higher or fairer in the annals of modern literature. One should have his own pen to describe him as he ought to be described: amiable, various, and bland, with careless inimitable grace touching on every kind of excellence: with manners unstudied, but a gentle heart: performing miracles of skill from pure happiness of nature, and whose greatest fault was ignorance of his own worth. As a poet, he is the most flowing and elegant of our versifiers since Pope, with traits of artless nature which Pope had not, and with a peculiar felicity in his turns upon words, which he constantly repeated with delightful effect, such as:

——"His lot, though small,
He sees that little lot, the lot of all."

. . . . . .

"And turn'd and look'd, and turn'd to look again."

As a novelist, his "Vicar of Wakefield" has charmed all Europe. What reader is there in the civilised world who is not the better for the story of the washes which the worthy Dr. Primrose demolished so deliberately with the poker—for the knowledge of the guinea which the Miss Primroses kept unchanged in their pockets—the adventure of the picture of the Vicar's family, which could not be got into the house—and that of the Flamborough family, all painted with oranges in their hands—or for the story of the case of shagreen spectacles and the cosmogony?

As a comic writer, his "Tony Lumpkin" draws forth new powers from Mr. Liston's face. That alone is praise enough for it. Poor Goldsmith! how happy he has made others! how unhappy he was in himself! He never had the pleasure of reading his own works! He had only the satisfaction of good-naturedly relieving the necessities of others, and the consolation of being harassed to death with his own! He is the most amusing and interesting person in one

of the most amusing and interesting books in the world, Boswell's "Life of Johnson." His peach-coloured coat shall always bloom in Boswell's writings, and his fame survive in his own! His genius was a mixture of originality and imitation: he could do nothing without some model before him, and he could copy nothing that he did not adorn with the graces of his own mind. Almost all the latter part of the "Vicar of Wakefield," and a great deal of the former, is taken from "Joseph Andrews;" but the circumstances I have mentioned above are not. The finest things he has left behind him in verse are his character of a country schoolmaster, and that prophetic description of Burke in the "Retaliation." His moral Essays in the "Citizen of the World" are as agreeable chit-chat as can be conveyed in the form of didactic discourses.

BURNS.

Burns the poet had a strong mind, and a strong body, the fellow to it. He had a real heart of flesh and blood beating in his bosom—you can almost hear it throb. Some one said, that if you had shaken hands with him, his hands would have burnt yours. The Gods indeed "made him poetical;" but Nature had a hand in him first. His heart was in the right place. He did not "create a soul under the ribs of death," by tinkling siren sounds, or by piling up centos of poetical diction; but for the artificial flowers of poetry, he plucked the mountain-daisy under his feet; and a field-mouse, hurrying from its ruined dwelling, could inspire him with the sentiments of terror and pity. He held the plough or the pen with the same firm, manly grasp; nor did he cut out poetry as we cut out watch-papers, with finical dexterity, nor from the same flimsy materials. Burns was not like Shakspeare in the range of his genius; but there is something of the same magnanimity, directness, and unaffected character about him. He was not a sickly sentimentalist, a namby-pamby poet, a mincing metre ballad-monger, any more than Shakspeare. He would as soon hear "a brazen candlestick tuned, or a dry wheel grate on the axletree." He was as much of a man, not a twentieth part as much of a poet, as Shakspeare. With but little of his imagination or inventive power, he had the same life of mind: within the narrow circle of personal feeling or domestic incidents, the pulse of his poetry flows as healthily and vigorously. He had an eye to see, a heart to feel:—no more. His pictures of good-fellowship, of social glee, of quaint humour, are equal to anything; they come up to nature, and they cannot go beyond it. The sly jest collected in his laughing eye at the sight of the grotesque and

ludicrous in manners; the large tear rolled down his manly cheek at the sight of another's distress. He has made us as well acquainted with himself as it is possible to be, has let out the honest impulses of his native disposition, the unequal conflict of the passions in his breast, with the same frankness and truth of description. His strength is not greater than his weakness; his virtues were greater than his vices. His virtues belonged to his genius: his vices to his situation, which did not correspond to his genius. . . .

One would think that nothing could surpass his songs in beauty of expression and in true pathos; and nothing does or can, but some of the old Scotch ballads themselves. There is in them a still more original cast of thought, a more romantic imagery—the thistle's glittering down, the gilliflower on the old garden-wall, the horseman's silver bells, the hawk on its perch: a closer intimacy with nature, a firmer reliance on it, as the only stock of wealth which the mind has to resort to, a more infantine simplicity of manners, a greater strength of affection, hopes longer cherished and longer deferred, sighs that the heart dare hardly heave, and "thoughts that often lie too deep for tears." We seem to feel that those who wrote and sang them (the early minstrels) lived in the open air, wandering on from place to place with restless feet and thoughts, and lending an ever-open ear to the fearful accidents of war or love, floating on the breath of old tradition or common fame, and moving the strings of their harp with sounds that sank into a nation's heart. How fine an illustration of this is that passage in "Don Quixote" where the knight and Sancho, going in search of Dulcinea, inquire their way of the countryman who was driving his mules to plough before break of day, "singing the ancient ballad of Roncesvalles!"

BYRON.

Lord Byron shuts himself up too much in the impenetrable gloom of his own thoughts, and buries the natural light of things in "nook monastic." The "Giaour," the "Corsair," "Childe Harold," are all the same person, and they are apparently all himself. The everlasting repetition of one subject, the same dark ground of fiction, with the darker colours of the poet's mind spread over it, the unceasing accumulation of horrors on horror's head, steels the mind against the sense of pain, as inevitably as the unwearied Siren sounds and luxurious monotony of Mr. Moore's poetry make it inaccessible to pleasure. Lord Byron's poetry is as morbid as Mr. Moore's is careless and dissipated. He has more depth of passion, more force and im-

petuosity, but the passion is always of the same unaccountable character, at once violent and sullen, fierce and gloomy. It is not the passion of a mind struggling with misfortune or the hopelessness of its desires, but of a mind preying upon itself, and disgusted with, or indifferent to, all other things. There is nothing less poetical than this sort of unaccommodating selfishness. There is nothing more repulsive than this sort of ideal absorption of all the interests of others, of the good and ills of life, in the ruling passion and moody abstraction of a single mind, as if it would make itself the centre of the universe, and there was nothing worth cherishing but its intellectual diseases. It is like a cancer eating into the heart of poetry. But still there is power; and power rivets attention and forces admiration. "He hath a demon;" and that is the next thing to being full of the God. His brow collects the scattered gloom; his eye flashes livid fire that withers and consumes. But still we watch the progress of the scathing bolt with interest, and mark the ruin it leaves behind with awe. Within the contracted range of his imagination, he has great unity and truth of keeping. He chooses elements and agents congenial to his mind: the dark and glittering ocean, the frail bark hurrying before the storm, pirates, and men that "house on the wild sea with wild usages." He gives the tumultuous eagerness of action and the fixed despair of thought. In vigour of style and force of conception he in one sense surpasses every writer of the present day. His indignant apothegms are like oracles of misanthropy. He who wishes for "a curse to kill with" may find it in Lord Byron's writings. Yet he has beauty lurking underneath his strength, tenderness sometimes joined with the frenzy of despair. A flash of golden light sometimes follows from a stroke of his pencil, like a falling meteor. The flowers that adorn his poetry bloom over charnel-houses and the grave! . . .

SCOTT.

Walter Scott is the most popular of all the poets of the present day, and deservedly so. He describes that which is most easily and generally understood with more vivacity and effect than anybody else. He has no excellences, either of a lofty or recondite kind, which lie beyond the reach of the most ordinary capacity to find out; but he has all the good qualities which all the world agree to understand. His style is clear, flowing, and transparent: his sentiments, of which his style is an easy and natural medium, are common to him with his readers. He has none of Mr. Wordsworth's

idiosyncrasy. He differs from his readers only in a greater range of knowledge and facility of expression. His poetry belongs to the class of *improvisatore* poetry. It has neither depth, height, nor breadth in it; neither uncommon strength nor uncommon refinement of thought, sentiment, or language. It has no originality. But if this author has no research, no moving power in his own breast, he relies with the greater safety and success on the force of his subject. He selects a story such as is sure to please, full of incidents, characters, peculiar manners, costume, and scenery; and he tells it in a way that can offend no one. He never wearies or disappoints you. He is communicative and garrulous; but he is not his own hero. He never obtrudes himself on your notice to prevent your seeing the subject. What passes in the poem, passes much as it would have done in reality. The author has little or nothing to do with it. Mr. Scott has great intuitive power of fancy, great vividness of pencil in placing external objects and events before the eye. The force of his mind is picturesque rather than *moral.* He gives more of the features of nature than the soul of passion. He conveys the distinct outlines and visible changes in outward objects, rather than "their mortal consequences." He is very inferior to Lord Byron in intense passion, to Moore in delightful fancy, to Mr. Wordsworth in profound sentiment; but he has more picturesque power than any of them; that is, he places the objects themselves, about which *they* might feel and think, in a much more striking point of view, with greater variety of dress and attitude, and with more local truth of colouring. His imagery is Gothic and grotesque. The manners and actions have the interest and curiosity belonging to a wild country and a distant period of time. Few descriptions have a more complete reality, a more striking appearance of life and motion, than that of the warriors in the "Lady of the Lake," who start up at the command of Rhoderic Dhu from their concealment under the fern, and disappear again in an instant. The "Lay of the Last Minstrel" and "Marmion" are the first, and perhaps the best, of his works. . . .

WORDSWORTH.

Mr. Wordsworth is the most original poet now living. He is the reverse of Walter Scott in his defects and excellences. He has nearly all that the other wants, and wants all that the other possesses. His poetry is not external, but internal; it does not depend upon tradition, or story, or old song; he furnishes it from his own mind, and is his own subject. He is the poet of mere senti-

ment. Of many of the "Lyrical Ballads" it is not possible to speak in terms of too high praise, such as "Hart-leap Well," the "Banks of the Wye," "Poor Susan," parts of the "Leech-gatherer," the "Lines to a Cuckoo," "to a Daisy," the "Complaint," several of the Sonnets, and a hundred others of inconceivable beauty, of perfect originality and pathos. They open a finer and deeper vein of thought and feeling than any poet in modern times has done, or attempted. He has produced a deeper impression, and on a smaller circle, than any other of his contemporaries. His powers have been mistaken by the age, nor does he exactly understand them himself. He cannot form a whole. He has not the constructive faculty. He can give only the fine tones of thought, drawn from his mind by accident or nature, like the sounds drawn from the Æolian harp by the wandering gale. He is totally deficient in all the machinery of poetry. His "Excursion," taken as a whole, notwithstanding the noble materials thrown away in it, is a proof of this. The line labours, the sentiment moves slow; but the poem stands stock-still. The reader makes no way from the first line to the last. It is more than anything in the world like Robinson Crusoe's boat, which would have been an excellent good boat, and would have carried him to the other side of the globe, but that he could not get it out of the sand where it stuck fast. I did what little I could to help to launch it at the time, but it would not do. I am not, however, one of those who laugh at the attempts or failures of men of genius. It is not my way to cry, "Long life to the conqueror!" Success and desert are not with me synonymous terms; and the less Mr. Wordsworth's general merits have been understood, the more necessary is it to insist upon them. This is not the place to repeat what I have already said on the subject. The reader may turn to it in the "Round Table." I do not think, however, there is anything in the larger poem equal to many of the detached pieces in the "Lyrical Ballads." As Mr. Wordsworth's poems have been little known to the public, or chiefly through garbled extracts from them, I will here give an entire poem, "Hart-Leap Well" (one that has always been a favourite with me), that the reader may know what it is that the admirers of this author find to be delighted with in his poetry. Those who do not feel the beauty and the force of it may save themselves the trouble of inquiring further.

[*Lectures on the English Comic Writers*, 1819. Four Editions of this work have been published.]

I SHALL conclude this imperfect and desultory sketch of wit and humour with Barrow's celebrated description of the same subject. He says:—"But first it may be demanded, what the thing we speak of is, or what this facetiousness doth import; to which question I might reply, as Democritus did to him that asked the definition of a man—*'tis that which we all see and know;* and one better apprehends what it is by acquaintance, than I can inform him by description. It is, indeed, a thing so versatile and multiform, appearing in so many shapes, so many postures, so many garbs, so variously apprehended by several eyes and judgments, that it seemeth no less hard to settle a clear and certain notice thereof, than to make a portrait of Proteus, or to define the figure of fleeting air. Sometimes it lieth in pat allusion to a known story, or in seasonable application of a trivial saying, or in forging an apposite tale: sometimes it playeth in words and phrases, taking advantage from the ambiguity of their sense, or the affinity of their sound: sometimes it is wrapped in a dress of luminous expression: sometimes it lurketh under an odd similitude. Sometimes it is lodged in a sly question, in a smart answer; in a quirkish reason; in a shrewd intimation; in cunningly diverting or cleverly restoring an objection: sometimes it is couched in a bold scheme of speech; in a tart irony; in a lusty hyperbole; in a startling metaphor; in a plausible reconciling of contradictions, or in acute nonsense: sometimes a scenical representation of persons or things, a counterfeit speech, a mimical look or gesture passeth for it; sometimes an affected simplicity, sometimes a presumptuous bluntness giveth it being; sometimes it riseth only from a lucky hitting upon what is strange: sometimes from a crafty wresting obvious matter to the purpose: often it consisteth in one knows not what, and springeth up one can hardly tell how. Its ways are unaccountable and inexplicable, being answerable to the numberless rovings of fancy and windings of language. It is, in short, a manner of speaking out of the simple and plain way (such as reason teacheth and knoweth things by), which by a pretty surprising uncouthness in conceit or expression doth affect and amuse the fancy, showing in it some wonder, and breathing some delight thereto. It raiseth admiration, as signifying a nimble sagacity of apprehension, a special felicity of invention, a vivacity of spirit, and reach of wit more than vulgar: it seeming to argue a rare quickness of parts, that one can fetch in remote conceits applicable; a notable skill

that he can dexterously accommodate them to a purpose before him, together with a lively briskness of humour, not apt to damp those sportful flashes of imagination. (Whence in Aristotle such persons are termed επιδεξιοι, dexterous men and ευτροποι, men of facile or versatile manners, who can easily turn themselves to all things, or turn all things to themselves.) It also procureth delight by gratifying curiosity with its rareness or semblance of difficulty (as monsters, not for their beauty but their rarity; as juggling tricks, not for their use but their abstruseness, are beheld with pleasure); by diverting the mind from its road of serious thoughts; by instilling gaiety and airiness of spirit; by provoking to such dispositions of spirit, in way of emulation or complaisance, and by seasoning matter, otherwise distasteful or insipid, with an unusual and thence grateful tang." . . .

ENGLISH COMEDY.

Comedy is a "graceful ornament to the civil order; the Corinthian capital of polished society." Like the mirrors which have been added to the sides of one of our theatres, it reflects the images of grace, of gaiety, and pleasure double, and completes the perspective of human life. To read a good comedy is to keep the best company in the world, where the best things are said and the most amusing happen. The wittiest remarks are always ready on the tongue, and the luckiest occasions are always at hand to give birth to the happiest conceptions. Sense makes strange havoc of nonsense. Refinement acts as a foil to affectation, and affectation to ignorance. Sentence after sentence tells. We don't know which to admire most, the observation or the answer to it. We would give our fingers to be able to talk so ourselves, or to hear others talk so. In turning over the pages of the best comedies, we are almost transported to another world, and escape from this dull age to one that was all life, and whim, and mirth, and humour. The curtain rises, and a gayer scene presents itself, as on the canvas of Watteau. We are admitted behind the scenes like spectators at court, on a levee or birthday; but it is the court, the gala-day of wit and pleasure, of gallantry and Charles II.! What an air breathes from the name! what a rustling of silks and waving of plumes! what a sparkling of diamond earrings and shoe-buckles! What bright eyes! (Ah, those were Waller's Sacharissa's as she passed!) what killing looks and graceful motions! How the faces of the whole ring are dressed in smiles! how the repartee goes round! how wit and folly, elegance and awkward imitation of it, set one another off! Happy, thought-

less age, when kings and nobles led purely ornamental lives; when the utmost stretch of a morning's study went no further than the choice of a sword-knot or the adjustment of a side-curl; when the soul spoke out in all the pleasing eloquence of dress; and beaux and belles, enamoured of themselves in one another's follies, fluttered like gilded butterflies, in giddy mazes, through the walks of St. James's Park!

The four principal writers of this style of comedy (which I think the best) are undoubtedly Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar. The dawn was in Etherege, as its latest close was in Sheridan. It is hard to say which of these four is best, or in what each of them excels, they had so many and such great excellences.

Congreve is the most distinct from the others, and the most easily defined, both from what he possessed and from what he wanted. He had by far the most wit and elegance, with less of other things, of humour, character, incident, &c. His style is inimitable, nay, perfect. It is the highest model of comic dialogue. Every sentence is replete with sense and satire, conveyed in the most polished and pointed terms. Every page presents a shower of brilliant conceits, is a tissue of epigrams in prose, is a new triumph of wit, a new conquest over dulness. The fire of artful raillery is nowhere else so well kept up. This style, which he was almost the first to introduce, and which he carried to the utmost pitch of classical refinement, reminds one exactly of Collins's description of wit as opposed to humour:

> "Whose jewels in his crisped hair
> Are placed each other's light to share."

Sheridan will not bear a comparison with him in the regular antithetical construction of his sentences, and in the mechanical artifices of his style, though so much later, and though style in general has been so much studied, and in the mechanical part so much improved since then. It bears every mark of being what he himself in the dedication of one of his plays tells us that it was, a spirited copy taken off and carefully revised from the most select society of his time, exhibiting all the sprightliness, ease, and animation of familiar conversation, with the correctness and delicacy of the most finished composition. His works are a singular treat to those who have cultivated a taste for the niceties of English style: there is a peculiar flavour in the very words, which is to be found in hardly any other writer. To the mere reader his writings would be an irreparable loss: to the stage they are already become a dead letter, with the exception of one of them, "Love for Love." This play is as full of

character, incident, and stage-effect as almost any of those of his contemporaries, and fuller of wit than any of his own, except perhaps the "Way of the World." It still acts, and is still acted well. The effect of it is prodigious on the well-informed spectator. . . .

Wycherley was before Congreve; and his "Country Wife" will last longer than anything of Congreve's as a popular acting play. It is only a pity that it is not entirely his own, but it is enough so to do him never-ceasing honour, for the best things are his own. His humour is, in general, broader, his characters more natural, and his incidents more striking than Congreve's. It may be said of Congreve, that the workmanship overlays the materials: in Wycherley, the casting of the parts and the fable are alone sufficient to ensure success. We forget Congreve's characters, and only remember what they say: we remember Wycherley's characters, and the incidents they meet with, just as if they were real, and forget what they say, comparatively speaking. Miss Peggy (or Mrs. Margery Pinchwife) is a character that will last for ever, I should hope; and even when the original is no more, if that should ever be, while self-will, curiosity, art, and ignorance are to be found in the same person, it will be just as good and as intelligible as ever in the description, because it is built on first principles, and brought out in the fullest and broadest manner. . . .

THE PERIODICAL ESSAYISTS.

"The proper study of mankind is man."

I now come to speak of that sort of writing which has been so successfully cultivated in this country by our periodical Essayists, and which consists in applying the talents and resources of the mind to all that mixed mass of human affairs which, though not included under the head of any regular art, science, or profession, falls under the cognisance of the writer, and "comes home to the business and bosoms of men."

Quicquid agunt homines nostri farrago libelli,

is the general motto of this department of literature. It does not treat of minerals or fossils, of the virtues of plants or the influence of planets; it does not meddle with forms of belief or systems of

philosophy, nor launch into the world of spiritual existences; but it makes familiar with the world of men and women, records their actions, assigns their motives, exhibits their whims, characterises their pursuits in all their singular and endless variety, ridicules their absurdities, exposes their inconsistencies, "holds the mirror up to nature, and shows the very age and body of the time, its form and pressure;" takes minutes of our dress, air, looks, words, thoughts, and actions; shows us what we are, and what we are not; plays the whole game of human life over before us, and by making us enlightened spectators of its many-coloured scenes, enables us (if possible) to become tolerably reasonable agents in the one in which we have to perform a part. "The act and practic part of life is thus made the mistress of our theorique." It is the best and most natural course of study. It is in morals and manners what the experimental is in natural philosophy, as opposed to the dogmatical method. It does not deal in sweeping clauses of proscription and anathema, but in nice distinctions and liberal constructions. It makes up its general accounts from details, its few theories from many facts. It does not try to prove all black or all white as it wishes, but lays on the intermediate colours (and most of them not unpleasing ones), as it finds them blended with "the web of our life, which is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together." It inquires what human life is and has been, to show what it ought to be. It follows it into courts and camps, into town and country, into rustic sports or learned disputations, into the various shades of prejudice or ignorance, of refinement or barbarism, into its private haunts or public pageants, into its weaknesses and littlenesses, its professions and its practices: before it pretends to distinguish right from wrong, or one thing from another. How, indeed, should it do so otherwise?

> "Quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,
> Plenius et melius Chrysippo et Crantore dicit."

The writers I speak of are, if not moral philosophers, moral historians, and that's better: or if they are both, they found the one character upon the other; their premises precede their conclusions; and we put faith in their testimony, for we know that it is true.

MONTAIGNE.

MONTAIGNE was the first person who in his "Essays" led the way to this kind of writing among the moderns. The great merit of Montaigne, then, was that he may be said to have been the first

who had the courage to say as an author what he felt as a man. And as courage is generally the effect of conscious strength, he was probably led to do so by the richness, truth, and force of his own observations on books and men. He was, in the truest sense, a man of original mind; that is, he had the power of looking at things for himself, or as they really were, instead of blindly trusting to and fondly repeating what others told him that they were. He got rid of the go-cart of prejudice and affectation, with the learned lumber that follows at their heels, because he could do without them. In taking up his pen he did not set up for a philosopher, wit, orator, or moralist, but he became all these by merely daring to tell us whatever passed through his mind, in its naked simplicity and force, that he thought anyways worth communicating. He did not, in the abstract character of an author, undertake to say all that could be said upon a subject, but what in his capacity as an inquirer after truth he happened to know about it. He was neither a pedant nor a bigot. He neither supposed that he was bound to know all things, nor that all things were bound to conform to what he had fancied or would have them to be. In treating of men and manners, he spoke of them as he found them, not according to perconceived notions and abstract dogmas; and he began by teaching us what he himself was. In criticising books he did not compare them with rules and systems, but told us what he saw to like or dislike in them. He did not take his standard of excellence "according to an exact scale" of Aristotle, or fall out with a work that was good for anything because "not one of the angles at the four corners was a right one." He was, in a word, the first author who was not a bookmaker, and who wrote not to make converts of others to established creeds and prejudices, but to satisfy his own mind of the truth of things. In this respect we know not which to be most charmed with, the author or the man. There is an inexpressible frankness and sincerity, as well as power, in what he writes. There is no attempt at imposition or concealment, no juggling tricks or solemn mouthing, no laboured attempts at proving himself always in the right, and everybody else in the wrong; he says what is uppermost, lays open what floats at the top or the bottom of his mind, and deserves Pope's character of him, where he professes to

> ——"pour out all as plain
> As downright Shippen, or as old Montaigne."

He does not converse with us like a pedagogue with his pupil, whom he wishes to make as great a blockhead as himself, but like a philosopher and friend who has passed through life with thought and

observation, and is willing to enable others to pass through it with pleasure and profit. A writer of this stamp, I confess, appears to me as much superior to a common bookworm as a library of real books is superior to a mere bookcase, painted and lettered on the outside with the names of celebrated works. As he was the first to attempt this new way of writing, so the same strong natural impulse which prompted the undertaking carried him to the end of his career. The same force and honesty of mind which urged him to throw off the shackles of custom and prejudice would enable him to complete his triumph over them. He has left little for his successors to achieve in the way of just and original speculation on human life. Nearly all the thinking of the two last centuries of that kind which the French denominate *morale observatrice* is to be found in Montaigne's "Essays:" there is the germ, at least, and generally much more. He sowed the seed and cleared away the rubbish, even where others have reaped the fruit or cultivated and decorated the soil to a greater degree of nicety and perfection. There is no one to whom the old Latin adage is more applicable than to Montaigne, "*Pereant isti qui ante nos nostra dixerunt.*" There has been no new impulse given to thought since his time. Among the specimens of criticisms on authors which he has left us are those on Virgil, Ovid, and Boccaccio, in the account of books which he thinks worth reading, or (which is the same thing) which he finds he can read in his old age, and which may be reckoned among the few criticisms which are worth reading at any age. . . .

STEELE AND ADDISON.

I HAVE always preferred the "Tatler" to the "Spectator." Whether it is owing to my having been earlier or better acquainted with the one than the other, my pleasure in reading these two admirable works is not in proportion to their comparative reputation. The "Tatler" contains only half the number of volumes, and, I will venture to say, nearly an equal quantity of sterling wit and sense. "The first sprightly runnings" are there: it has more of the original spirit, more of the freshness and stamp of nature. The indications of character and strokes of humour are more true and frequent; the reflections that suggest themselves arise more from the occasion, and are less spun out into regular dissertations. They are more like the remarks which occur in sensible conversation, and less like a lecture. Something is left to the understanding of the reader. Steele seems to have gone into his closet chiefly to set

down what he observed out of doors. Addison seems to have spent most of his time in his study, and to have spun out and wiredrawn the hints which he borrowed from Steele, or took from nature, to the utmost. I am far from wishing to depreciate Addison's talents, but I am anxious to do justice to Steele, who was, I think, upon the whole a less artificial and more original writer. The humorous descriptions of Steele resemble loose sketches, or fragments of a comedy; those of Addison are rather comments or ingenious paraphrases on the genuine text. The characters of the club, not only in the "Tatler," but in the "Spectator," were drawn by Steele. That of Sir Roger de Coverley is among the number. Addison has, however, gained himself immortal honour by his manner of filling up this last character. Who is there that can forget, or be insensible to, the inimitable nameless graces and varied traits of nature and of old English character in it: to his unpretending virtues and amiable weaknesses: to his modesty, generosity, hospitality, and eccentric whims: to the respect of his neighbours, and the affection of his domestics: to his wayward, hopeless, secret passion for his fair enemy, the widow, in which there is more of real romance and true delicacy than in a thousand tales of knight-errantry (we perceive the hectic flush of his cheek, the faltering of his tongue in speaking of her bewitching airs and "the whiteness of her hand"): to the havoc he makes among the game in his neighbourhood: to his speech from the bench, to show the Spectator what is thought of him in the country: to his unwillingness to be put up as a sign-post, and his having his own likeness turned into the Saracen's head: to his gentle reproof of the baggage of a gipsy that tells him "he has a widow in his line of life:" to his doubts as to the existence of witchcraft, and protection of reputed witches: to his account of the family pictures, and his choice of a chaplain: to his falling asleep at church, and his reproof of John Williams, as soon as he recovered from his nap, for talking in sermon-time? The characters of Will Wimble and Will Honeycomb are not a whit behind their friend, Sir Roger, in delicacy and felicity. The delightful simplicity and good-humoured officiousness in the one are set off by the graceful affectation and courtly pretension in the other. How long since I first became acquainted with these two characters in the "Spectator!" What old-fashioned friends they seem, and yet I am not tired of them like so many other friends, nor they of me! How airy these abstractions of the poet's pen stream over the dawn of our acquaintance with human life! how they glance their fairest colours on the prospect before us! how pure they remain in it to the last, like the rainbow in the evening-cloud, which the rude hand

of time and experience can neither soil nor dissipate! What a pity that we cannot find the reality! And yet if we did, the dream would be over. . . .

JOHNSON.

THE most triumphant record of the talents and character of Johnson is to be found in Boswell's Life of him. The man was superior to the author. When he threw aside his pen, which he regarded as an encumbrance, he became not only learned and thoughtful, but acute, witty, humorous, natural, honest; hearty and determined, "the king of good fellows and wale of old men." There are as many smart repartees, profound remarks, and keen invectives to be found in Boswell's "inventory of all he said" as are recorded of any celebrated man. The life and dramatic play of his conversation forms a contrast to his written works. His natural powers and undisguised opinions were called out in convivial intercourse. In public, he practised with the foils on: in private, he unsheathed the sword of controversy, and it was "the Ebro's temper." The eagerness of opposition roused him from his natural sluggishness and acquired timidity; he returned blow for blow; and whether the trial were of argument or wit, none of his rivals could boast much of the encounter. Burke seems to have been the only person who had a chance with him; and it is the unpardonable sin of Boswell's work, that he has purposely omitted their combats of strength and skill. Goldsmith asked, "Does he wind into a subject like a serpent, as Burke does?" And when exhausted with sickness, he himself said, "If that fellow Burke were here now, he would kill me." It is to be observed that Johnson's colloquial style was as blunt, direct, and downright as his style of studied composition was involved and circuitous. As when Topham Beauclerc and Langton knocked him up at his chambers, at three in the morning, and he came to the door with the poker in his hand, but seeing them, exclaimed, 'What, is it you, my lads? then I'll have a frisk with you!" And he afterwards reproaches Langton, who was a literary milksop, for leaving them to go to an engagement "with some *un-ideal* girls." What words to come from the mouth of the great moralist and lexicographer! His good deeds were as many as his good sayings. His domestic habits, his tenderness to servants, and readiness to oblige his friends; the quantity of strong tea that he drank to keep down sad thoughts; his many labours reluctantly begun and irresolutely laid aside; his honest acknowledgment of his own, and indulgence to the weaknesses of others; his throwing himself back

in the post-chaise with Boswell, and saying, "Now I think I am a good-humoured fellow," though nobody thought him so, and yet he was; his quitting the society of Garrick and his actresses, and his reason for it; his dining with Wilkes, and his kindness to Goldsmith; his sitting with the young ladies on his knee at the Mitre, to give them good advice, in which situation, if not explained, he might be taken for Falstaff; and last and noblest, his carrying the unfortunate victim of disease and dissipation on his back up through Fleet Street (an act which realises the parable of the good Samaritan) —all these, and innumerable others, endear him to the reader, and must be remembered to his lasting honour. He had faults, but they lie buried with him. He had his prejudices and his intolerant feelings; but he suffered enough in the conflict of his own mind with them. For if no man can be happy in the free exercise of his reason, no wise man can be happy without it. His were not time-serving, heartless, hypocritical prejudices, but deep, inwoven, not to be rooted out but with life and hope, which he found from old habit necessary to his own peace of mind, and thought so to the peace of mankind. I do not hate, but love him for them. They were between himself and his conscience; and should be left to that higher tribunal, "where they in trembling hope repose, the bosom of his Father and his God." In a word, he has left behind him few wiser or better men.

THE ENGLISH NOVELISTS.

[The greater portion of this paper originally appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1815.]

THERE is an exclamation in one of Gray's Letters—"Be mine to read eternal new romances of Marivaux and Crebillon!" If I did not utter a similar aspiration at the conclusion of the last new novel which I read (I would not give offence by being more particular as to the name), it was not from any want of affection for the class of writing to which it belongs; for, without going so far as the celebrated French philosopher, who thought that more was to be learnt from good novels and romances than from the gravest treatises on history and morality, yet there are few works to which I am oftener tempted to turn for profit or delight than to the standard productions in this species of composition. We find there a close imitation of men and manners; we see the very web and texture of society as it really exists, and as we meet with it when we come into the world. If poetry has "something more divine in

it," this savours more of humanity. We are brought acquainted with the motives and characters of mankind, imbibe our notions of virtue and vice from practical examples, and are taught a knowledge of the world through the airy medium of romance. As a record of past manners and opinions, too, such writings afford the best and fullest information. For example, I should be at a loss where to find in any authentic documents of the same period so satisfactory an account of the general state of society, and of moral, political, and religious feeling in the reign of George II., as we meet with in the "Adventures of Joseph Andrews and his friend Mr. Abraham Adams." This work, indeed, I take to be a perfect piece of statistics in its kind. In looking into any regular history of that period, into a learned and eloquent charge to a grand jury or the clergy of a diocese, or into a tract on controversial divinity, we should hear only of the ascendency of the Protestant succession, the horrors of Popery, the triumph of civil and religious liberty, the wisdom and moderation of the sovereign, the happiness of the subject, and the flourishing state of manufactures and commerce. But if we really wish to know what all these fine-sounding names come to, we cannot do better than turn to the works of those who, having no other object than to imitate nature, could only hope for success from the fidelity of their pictures, and were bound (in self-defence) to reduce the boasts of vague theorists and the exaggerations of angry disputants to the mortifying standard of reality. Extremes are said to meet; and the works of imagination, as they are called, sometimes come the nearest to truth and nature. Fielding, in speaking on this subject and vindicating the use and dignity of the style of writing in which he excelled against the loftier pretensions of professed historians, says that in their productions nothing is true but the names and dates, whereas in his everything is true but the names and dates. If so, he has the advantage on his side.

I will here confess, however, that I am a little prejudiced on the point in question, and that the effect of many fine speculations has been lost upon me, from an early familiarity with the most striking passages in the work to which I have just alluded. Thus nothing can be more captivating than the description somewhere given by Mr. Burke of the indissoluble connection between learning and nobility, and of the respect universally paid by wealth to piety and morals. But the effect of this ideal representation has always been spoiled by my recollection of Parson Adams sitting over his cup of ale in Sir Thomas Booby's kitchen. Echard "On the Contempt of the Clergy" is, in like manner, a very good book, and "worthy of all acceptation;" but, somehow, an unlucky impression of the reality

of Parson Trulliber involuntarily checks the emotions of respect to which it might otherwise give rise; while, on the other hand, the lecture which Lady Booby reads to Lawyer Scout on the immediate expulsion of Joseph and Fanny from the parish casts no very favourable light on the flattering accounts of our practical jurisprudence which are to be found in "Blackstone" or "De Lolme." The most moral writers, after all, are those who do not pretend to inculcate any moral. The professed moralist almost unavoidably degenerates into the partisan of a system; and the philosopher is too apt to warp the evidence to his own purpose. But the painter of manners gives the facts of human nature, and leaves us to draw the inference: if we are not able to do this, or do it ill, at least it is our own fault.

The first-rate writers in this class of course are few; but those few we may reckon among the greatest ornaments and best benefactors of our kind. There is a certain set of them who, as it were, take their rank by the side of reality, and are appealed to as evidence on all questions concerning human nature. The principal of these are Cervantes and Le Sage, who may be considered as having been naturalised among ourselves; and, of native English growth, Fielding, Smollett, Richardson, and Sterne.[1] As this is a department of criticism which deserves more attention than has been usually bestowed upon it, I shall here venture to recur (not from choice, but necessity) to what I have said upon it in a well-known periodical publication, and endeavour to contribute my mite towards settling the standard of excellence, both as to degree and kind, in these several writers.

CERVANTES AND LE SAGE.

I SHALL begin with the history of the renowned Don Quixote de la Mancha, who presents something more stately, more romantic, and at the same time more real to the imagination than any other hero upon record. His lineaments, his accoutrements, his pasteboard vizor, are familiar to us; and Mambrino's helmet still glitters in the sun! We not only feel the greatest love and veneration for the knight himself, but a certain respect for all those connected with him—the curate and Master Nicolas the barber, Sancho and Dapple, and even for Rosinante's leanness and his errors. Perhaps

[1] It is not to be forgotten that the author of "Robinson Crusoe" was also an Englishman. His other works, such as the "Life of Colonel Jack," &c., are of the same cast, and leave an impression on the mind more like that of things than words.

there is no work which combines so much whimsical invention with such an air of truth. Its popularity is almost unequalled; and yet its merits have not been sufficiently understood. The story is the least part of them; though the blunders of Sancho, and the unlucky adventures of his master, are what naturally catch the attention of the majority of readers. The pathos and dignity of the sentiments are often disguised under the ludicrousness of the subject, and provoke laughter when they might well draw tears. The character of Don Quixote himself is one of the most perfect disinterestedness. He is an enthusiast of the most amiable kind: of a nature equally open, gentle, and generous: a lover of truth and justice; and one who had brooded over the fine dreams of chivalry and romance, till they had robbed him of himself, and cheated his brain into a belief of their reality. There cannot be a greater mistake than to consider "Don Quixote" as a merely satirical work, or as a vulgar attempt to explode "the long-forgotten order of chivalry." There could be no need to explode what no longer existed. Besides, Cervantes himself was a man of the most sanguine and enthusiastic temperament; and even through the crazed and battered figure of the knight, the spirit of chivalry shines out with undiminished lustre; as if the author had half-designed to revive the example of past ages, and once more "witch the world with noble horsemanship." Oh! if ever the mouldering flame of Spanish liberty is destined to break forth, wrapping the tyrant and the tyranny in one consuming blaze, that the spark of generous sentiment and romantic enterprise, from which it must be kindled, has not been quite extinguished will perhaps be owing to thee, Cervantes, and to thy "Don Quixote!"

The character of Sancho is not more admirable in itself than as a relief to that of the knight. The contrast is as picturesque and striking as that between the figures of Rosinante and Dapple. Never was there so complete a *partie quarrée*:—they answer to one another at all points. Nothing need surpass the truth of physiognomy in the description of the master and man, both as to body and mind; the one lean and tall, the other round and short; the one heroical and courteous, the other selfish and servile; the one full of high-flown fancies, the other a bag of proverbs; the one always starting some romantic scheme, the other trying to keep to the safe side of custom and tradition. The gradual ascendency, however, obtained by Don Quixote over Sancho is as finely managed as it is characteristic. Credulity and a love of the marvellous are as natural to ignorance as selfishness and cunning. Sancho by degrees becomes a kind of lay-brother of the order; acquires a taste

for adventures in his own way, and is made all but an entire convert, by the discovery of the hundred crowns in one of his most comfortless journeys. Towards the end, his regret at being forced to give up the pursuit of knight-errantry almost equals his master's; and he seizes the proposal of Don Quixote for them to turn shepherds with the greatest avidity—still applying it in his own fashion; for while the Don is ingeniously torturing the names of his humble acquaintance into classical terminations, and contriving scenes of gallantry and song, Sancho exclaims, "Oh, what delicate wooden spoons shall I carve! what crumbs and cream shall I devour!"—forgetting, in his milk and fruits, the pullets and geese at Camacho's wedding.

This intuitive perception of the hidden analogies of things, or, as it may be called, this *instinct of the imagination*, is, perhaps, what stamps the character of genius on the productions of art more than any other circumstance; for it works unconsciously like nature, and receives its impressions from a kind of inspiration. There is as much of this indistinct keeping and involuntary unity of purpose in Cervantes as in any author whatever. Something of the same unsettled, rambling humour extends itself to all the subordinate parts and characters of the work. Thus we find the curate confidentially informing Don Quixote, that if he could get the ear of the Government, he has something of considerable importance to propose for the good of the State; and our adventurer afterwards (in the course of his peregrinations) meets with a young gentleman who is a candidate for poetical honours, with a mad lover, a forsaken damsel, a Mahometan lady converted to the Christian faith, &c.—all delineated with the same truth, wildness, and delicacy of fancy. The whole work breathes that air of romance, that aspiration after imaginary good, that indescribable longing after something more than we possess, that in all places and in all conditions of life,

> ——"still prompts the eternal sigh,
> For which we wish to live, or dare to die!"

The leading characters in "Don Quixote" are strictly individuals; that is, they do not so much belong to as form a class by themselves. In other words, the actions and manners of the chief *dramatis personæ* do not arise out of the actions and manners of those around them, or the situation of life in which they are placed, but out of the peculiar dispositions of the persons themselves, operated upon by certain impulses of caprice and accident. Yet these impulses are so true to nature, and their operation so exactly described, that we not only recognise the fidelity of the representa-

tion, but recognise it with all the advantages of novelty superadded. They are in the best sense *originals*, namely, in the sense in which nature has her originals. They are unlike anything we have seen before—may be said to be purely ideal, and yet identify themselves more readily with our imagination, and are retained more strongly in memory, than perhaps any others: they are never lost in the crowd. One test of the truth of this ideal painting is the number of allusions which "Don Quixote" has furnished to the whole of civilised Europe; that is to say, of appropriate cases and striking illustrations of the universal principles of our nature. The detached incidents and occasional descriptions of human life are more familiar and obvious; so that we have nearly the same insight here given us into the characters of innkeepers, barmaids, hostlers, and puppet-show men that we have in Fielding. There is a much greater mixture, however, of the pathetic and sentimental with the quaint and humorous, than there ever is in Fielding. I might instance the story of the countryman whom Don Quixote and Sancho met in their doubtful search after Dulcinea, driving his mules to plough at break of day, and "singing the ancient ballad of Roncesvalles!" The episodes which are frequently introduced are excellent, but have, upon the whole, been overrated. They derive their interest from their connection with the main story. We are so pleased with that, that we are disposed to receive pleasure from everything else. Compared, for instance, with the serious tales of Boccaccio, they are slight and somewhat superficial. That of Marcella the fair shepherdess is, I think, the best. I shall only add, that "Don Quixote" was, at the time it was published, an entirely original work in its kind, and that the author claims the highest honour which can belong to one, that of being the inventor of a new style of writing. I have never read his "Galatea," nor his "Loves of Persiles and Sigismunda," though I have often meant to do it, and I hope to do so yet. Perhaps there is a reason lurking at the bottom of this dilatoriness. I am quite sure the reading of these works could not make me think higher of the author of "Don Quixote," and it might, for a moment or two, make me think less.

There is another Spanish novel, "Gusman D'Alfarache," nearly of the same age as "Don Quixote," and of great genius, though it can hardly be ranked as a novel or a work of imagination. It is a series of strange, unconnected adventures, rather dryly told, but accompanied by the most severe and sarcastic commentary. The satire, the wit, the eloquence and reasoning, are of the most potent kind; but they are didactic rather than dramatic. They would suit a homily or a pasquinade as well [as] or better than a romance.

Still there are in this extraordinary book occasional sketches of character and humorous descriptions to which it would be difficult to produce anything superior. This work, which is hardly known in this country except by name, has the credit without any reason of being the original of "Gil Blas." There is one incident the same, that of the unsavoury ragout which is served up for supper at the inn. In all other respects these two works are the very reverse of each other, both in their excellences and defects. "Lazarillo de Tormes" has been more read than the "Spanish Rogue," and is a work more readable, on this account among others, that it is contained in a duodecimo instead of a folio volume. This, however, is long enough, considering that it treats of only one subject, that of eating, or rather the possibility of living without eating. Famine is here framed into an art, and feasting is banished far hence. The hero's time and thoughts are taken up in a thousand shifts to procure a dinner; and that failing, in tampering with his stomach till supper-time, when, being forced to go supperless to bed, he comforts himself with the hopes of a breakfast the next morning, of which being again disappointed, he reserves his appetite for a luncheon, and then has to stave it off again by some meagre excuse or other till dinner; and so on, by a perpetual adjournment of this necessary process, through the four-and-twenty hours round. The quantity of food proper to keep body and soul together is reduced to a minimum; and the most uninviting morsels with which Lazarillo meets once a week as a God's-send are pampered into the most sumptuous fare by a long course of inanition. The scene of this novel could be laid nowhere so properly as in Spain, that land of priestcraft and poverty, where hunger seems to be the ruling passion, and starving the order of the day.

"Gil Blas" has, next to "Don Quixote," been more generally read and admired than any other novel; and in one sense deservedly so; for it is at the head of its class, though that class is very different from, and I should say inferior to, the other. There is little individual character in "Gil Blas." The author is a describer of manners, and not of character. He does not take the elements of human nature, and work them up into new combinations (which is the excellence of "Don Quixote"), nor trace the peculiar and shifting shades of folly and knavery as they are to be found in real life (like Fielding); but he takes off, as it were, the general, habitual impression which circumstances make on certain conditions of life, and moulds all his characters accordingly. All the persons whom he introduces carry about with them the badge of their profession; and you see little more of them than their costume. He describes

men as belonging to distinct classes in society; not as they are in themselves, or with the individual differences which are always to be discovered in nature. His hero, in particular, has no character but that of the successive circumstances in which he is placed. His priests are only described as priests: his valets, his players, his women, his courtiers and his sharpers, are all alike. Nothing can well exceed the monotony of the work in this respect, at the same time that nothing can exceed the truth and precision with which the general manners of these different characters are preserved, nor the felicity of the particular traits by which their common foibles are brought out. Thus the Archbishop of Granada will remain an everlasting memento of the weakness of human vanity; and the account of Gil Blas' legacy, of the uncertainty of human expectations. This novel is also deficient in the fable as well as in the characters. It is not a regularly constructed story, but a series of amusing adventures told with equal gaiety and good sense, and in the most graceful style imaginable.

It has been usual to class our own great novelists as imitators of one or other of these two writers. Fielding, no doubt, is more like "Don Quixote" than "Gil Blas;" Smollett is more like "Gil Blas" than "Don Quixote;" but there is not much resemblance in either case. Sterne's "Tristram Shandy" is a more direct instance of imitation; Richardson can scarcely be called an imitator of any one; or if he is, it is of the sentimental refinement of Marivaux, or of the verbose gallantry of the writers of the seventeenth century.

There is very little to warrant the common idea that Fielding was an imitator of Cervantes, except his own declaration of such an intention in the title-page of "Joseph Andrews," the romantic turn of the character of Parson Adams (the only romantic character in his works), and the proverbial humour of Partridge, which is kept up only for a few pages. Fielding's novels are, in general, thoroughly his own; and they are thoroughly English. What they are most remarkable for is neither sentiment, nor imagination, nor wit, nor even humour, though there is an immense deal of this last quality; but profound knowledge of human nature, at least of English nature, and masterly pictures of the characters of men as he saw them existing. This quality distinguishes all his works, and is shown almost equally in all of them. As a painter of real life, he was equal to Hogarth: as a mere observer of human nature, he was little inferior to Shakspeare, though without any of the genius and poetical qualities of his mind. His humour is less rich and laughable than Smollett's; his wit as often misses as hits; he has none of the fine pathos of Richardson or Sterne; but he has brought together a

greater variety of characters in common life, marked with more distinct peculiarities and without an atom of caricature, than any other novel-writer whatever. The extreme subtlety of observation on the springs of human conduct in ordinary characters is only equalled by the ingenuity of contrivance in bringing those springs into play, in such a manner as to lay open their smallest irregularity. The detection is always complete, and made with the certainty and skill of a philosophical experiment, and the obviousness and familiarity of a casual observation. The truth of the imitation is indeed so great, that it has been argued that Fielding must have had his materials ready-made to his hands, and was merely a transcriber of local manners and individual habits. For this conjecture, however, there seems to be no foundation. His representations, it is true, are local and individual; but they are not the less profound and conclusive. The feeling of the general principles of human nature, operating in particular circumstances, is always intense, and uppermost in his mind; and he makes use of incident and situation only to bring out character.

It is scarcely necessary to give any illustrations. Tom Jones is full of them. There is the account, for example, of the gratitude of the elder Blifil to his brother, for assisting him to obtain the fortune of Miss Bridget Alworthy by marriage; and of the gratitude of the poor in his neighbourhood to Alworthy himself, who had done so much good in the country that he had made every one in it his enemy. There is the account of the Latin dialogues between Partridge and his maid, of the assault made on him during one of these by Mrs. Partridge, and the severe bruises he patiently received on that occasion, after which the parish of Little Baddington rang with the story that the schoolmaster had killed his wife. There is the exquisite keeping in the character of Blifil, and the want of it in that of Jones. There is the gradation in the lovers of Molly Seagrim; the philosopher Square succeeding to Tom Jones, who again finds that he himself had succeeded to the accomplished Will Barnes, who had the first possession of her person, and had still possession of her heart, Jones being only the instrument of her vanity, as Square was of her interest. Then there is the discreet honesty of Black George, the learning of Thwackum and Square, and the profundity of Squire Western, who considered it as a physical impossibility that his daughter should fall in love with Tom Jones. We have also that gentleman's disputes with his sister, and the inimitable appeal of that lady to her niece:—"I was never so handsome as you, Sophy: yet I had something of you formerly. I was called the cruel Parthenissa. Kingdoms and

states, as Tully Cicero says, undergo alteration, and so must the human form!" The adventure of the same lady with the highwayman, who robbed her of her jewels while he complimented her beauty, ought not to be passed over, nor that of Sophia and her muff, nor the reserved coquetry of her cousin Fitzpatrick, nor the description of Lady Bellaston, nor the modest overtures of the pretty widow Hunt, nor the indiscreet babblings of Mrs. Honour. The moral of this book has been objected to without much reason; but a more serious objection has been made to the want of refinement and elegance in two principal characters. We never feel this objection, indeed, while we are reading the book; but at other times we have something like a lurking suspicion that Jones was but an awkward fellow, and Sophia a pretty simpleton. I do not know how to account for this effect, unless it is that Fielding's constantly assuring us of the beauty of his hero, and the good sense of his heroine, at last produces a distrust of both. The story of "Tom Jones" is allowed to be unrivalled; and it is this circumstance, together with the vast variety of characters, that has given the "History of a Foundling" so decided a preference over Fielding's other novels. The characters themselves, both in "Amelia" and "Joseph Andrews," are quite equal to any of those in "Tom Jones." The account of Miss Matthews and Ensign Hibbert, in the former of these; the way in which that lady reconciles herself to the death of her father; the inflexible Colonel Bath; the insipid Mrs. James, the complaisant Colonel Trent, the demure, sly, intriguing, equivocal Mrs. Bennet, the lord who is her seducer, and who attempts afterwards to seduce Amelia by the same mechanical process of a concert-ticket, a book, and the disguise of a great-coat; his little, fat, short-nosed, red-faced, good-humoured accomplice, the keeper of the lodging-house, who, having no pretensions to gallantry herself, has a disinterested delight in forwarding the intrigues and pleasures of others (to say nothing of honest Atkinson, the story of the miniature picture of Amelia, and the hashed mutton, which are in a different style), are masterpieces of description. The whole scene at the lodging-house, the masquerade, &c., in "Amelia" are equal in interest to the parallel scenes in "Tom Jones," and even more refined in the knowledge of character. For instance, Mrs. Bennet is superior to Mrs. Fitzpatrick in her own way. The uncertainty in which the event of her interview with her former seducer is left is admirable. Fielding was a master of what may be called the *double entendre* of character, and surprises you no less by what he leaves in the dark (hardly known to the persons themselves) than by the unexpected discoveries he makes of the real traits and circumstances in a character

with which, till then, you find you were unacquainted. There is nothing at all heroic, however, in the usual style of his delineations. He does not draw lofty characters or strong passions; all his persons are of the ordinary stature as to intellect, and possess little elevation of fancy or energy of purpose. Perhaps, after all, Parson Adams is his finest character. It is equally true to nature, and more ideal than any of the others. Its unsuspecting simplicity makes it not only more amiable, but doubly amusing, by gratifying the sense of superior sagacity in the reader. Our laughing at him does not once lesson our respect for him. His declaring that he would willingly walk ten miles to fetch his sermon on vanity, merely to convince Wilson of his thorough contempt of this vice, and his consoling himself for the loss of his "Æschylus" by suddenly recollecting that he could not read it if he had it, because it is dark, are among the finest touches of *naïveté*. The night-adventures at Lady Booby's with Beau Didapper and the amiable Slipslop are the most ludicrous; and that with the huntsman, who draws off the hounds from the poor Parson, because they would be spoiled by following *vermin*, the most profound. Fielding did not often repeat himself; but Dr. Harrison, in "Amelia," may be considered as a variation of the character of Adams: so also is Goldsmith's "Vicar of Wakefield;" and the latter part of that work, which sets out so delightfully, an almost entire plagiarism from Wilson's account of himself, and Adams's domestic history.

Smollett's first novel, "Roderick Random," which is also his best, appeared about the same time as Fielding's "Tom Jones;" and yet it has a much more modern air with it; but this may be accounted for from the circumstance that Smollett was quite a young man at the time, whereas Fielding's manner must have been formed long before. The style of "Roderick Random" is more easy and flowing than that of "Tom Jones;" the incidents follow one another more rapidly (though, it must be confessed, they never come in such a throng, or are brought out with the same dramatic effect); the humour is broader and as effectual; and there is very nearly, if not quite, an equal interest excited by the story. What, then, is it that gives the superiority to Fielding? It is the superior insight into the springs of human character, and the constant development of that character through every change of circumstance. Smollett's humour often rises from the situation of the persons, or the peculiarity of their external appearance, as from Roderick Random's carroty locks, which hung down over his shoulders like a pound of candles, or Strap's ignorance of London, and the blunders that follow from it. There is a tone of vulgarity about all his productions. The incidents fre-

quently resemble detached anecdotes taken from a newspaper or magazine; and, like those in "Gil Blas," might happen to a hundred other characters. He exhibits the ridiculous accidents and reverses to which human life is liable, not "the stuff" of which it is composed. He seldom probes to the quick, or penetrates beyond the surface; and therefore he leaves no stings in the minds of his readers, and in this respect is far less interesting than Fielding. His novels always enliven, and never tire us: we take them up with pleasure, and lay them down without any strong feeling of regret. We look on and laugh, as spectators of a highly amusing scene, without closing in with the combatants or being made parties in the event. We read "Roderick Random" as an entertaining story; for the particular accidents and modes of life which it describes have ceased to exist; but we regard "Tom Jones" as a real history, because the author never stops short of those essential principles which lie at the bottom of all our actions, and in which we feel an immediate interest—*intus et in cute*. Smollett excels most as the lively caricaturist, Fielding as the exact painter and profound metaphysician. I am far from maintaining that this account applies uniformly to the productions of these two writers; but I think that, as far as they essentially differ, what I have stated is the general distinction between them. "Roderick Random" is the purest of Smollett's novels: I mean in point of style and description. Most of the incidents and characters are supposed to have been taken from the events of his own life, and are therefore truer to nature. There is a rude conception of generosity in some of his characters, of which Fielding seems to have been incapable, his amiable persons being merely good-natured. It is owing to this that Strap is superior to Partridge, as there is a heartiness and warmth of feeling in some of the scenes between Lieutenant Bowling and his nephew, which is beyond Fielding's power of impassioned writing. The whole of the scene on ship-board is a most admirable and striking picture, and, I imagine, very little if at all exaggerated, though the interest it excites is of a very unpleasant kind, because the irritation and resistance to petty oppression can be of no avail. The picture of the little profligate French friar, who was Roderick's travelling companion, and of whom he always kept to the windward, is one of Smollett's most masterly sketches. "Peregrine Pickle" is no great favourite of mine, and "Launcelot Greaves" was not worthy of the genius of the author.

"Humphry Clinker" and "Count Fathom" are both equally admirable in their way. Perhaps the former is the most pleasant gossiping novel that ever was written: that which gives the most

pleasure with the least effort to the reader. It is quite as amusing as going the journey could have been; and we have just as good an idea of what happened on the road as if we had been of the party. Humphry Clinker himself is exquisite; and his sweetheart, Winifred Jenkins, not much behind him. Matthew Bramble, though not altogether original, is excellently supported, and seems to have been the prototype of Sir Anthony Absolute in the "Rivals." But Lismahago is the flower of the flock. His tenaciousness in argument is not so delightful as the relaxation of his logical severity, when he finds his fortune mellowing in the wintry smiles of Mrs. Tabitha Bramble. This is the best-preserved and most severe of all Smollett's characters. The resemblance to "Don Quixote" is only just enough to make it interesting to the critical reader without giving offence to anybody else. The indecency and filth in this novel are what must be allowed to all Smollett's writings. The subject and characters in "Count Fathom" are, in general, exceedingly disgusting: the story is also spun out to a degree of tediousness in the serious and sentimental parts; but there is more power of writing occasionally shown in it than in any of his works. I need only refer to the fine and bitter irony of the Count's address to the country of his ancestors on his landing in England; to the robber-scene in the forest, which has never been surpassed; to the Parisian swindler who personates a raw English country squire (Western is tame in the comparison); and to the story of the seduction in the west of England. It would be difficult to point out, in any author, passages written with more force and mastery than these.

It is not a very difficult undertaking to class Fielding or Smollett —the one as an observer of the characters of human life, the other as a describer of its various eccentricities. But it is by no means so easy to dispose of Richardson, who was neither an observer of the one nor a describer of the other, but who seemed to spin his materials entirely out of his own brain, as if there had been nothing existing in the world beyond the little room in which he sat writing. There is an artificial reality about his works, which is nowhere else to be met with. They have the romantic air of a pure fiction, with the literal minuteness of a common diary. The author had the strongest matter-of-fact imagination that ever existed, and wrote the oddest mixture of poetry and prose. He does not appear to have taken advantage of anything in actual nature, from one end of his works to the other; and yet, throughout all his works, voluminous as they are—and this, to be sure, is one reason why they are so—he sets about describing every object and transaction as if the whole had been given in on evidence by an eye-witness. This

kind of high finishing from imagination is an anomaly in the history of human genius; and certainly nothing so fine was ever produced by the same accumulation of minute parts. There is not the least distraction, the least forgetfulness of the end: every circumstance is made to tell. I cannot agree that this exactness of detail produces heaviness; on the contrary, it gives an appearance of truth, and a positive interest to the story; and we listen with the same attention as we should to the particulars of a confidential communication. I at one time used to think some parts of "Sir Charles Grandison" rather trifling and tedious, especially the long description of Miss Harriet Byron's wedding-clothes, till I was told of two young ladies who had severally copied out the whole of that very description for their own private gratification. After that, I could not blame the author.

The effect of reading this work is like an increase of kindred. You find yourself all of a sudden introduced into the midst of a large family, with aunts and cousins to the third and fourth generation, and grandmothers both by the father's and mother's side; and a very odd set of people they are, but people whose real existence and personal identity you can no more dispute than your own senses, for you see and hear all that they do or say. What is still more extraordinary, all this extreme elaborateness in working out the story seems to have cost the author nothing; for it is said that the published works are mere abridgments. I have heard (though this, I suspect, must be a pleasant exaggeration) that "Sir Charles Grandison" was originally written in eight-and-twenty volumes.

Pamela is the first of Richardson's productions, and the very child of his brain. Taking the general idea of the character of a modest and beautiful country girl, and of the ordinary situation in which she is placed, he makes out all the rest, even to the smallest circumstance, by the mere force of a reasoning imagination. It would seem as if a step lost would be as fatal here as in a mathematical demonstration. The development of the character is the most simple, and comes the nearest to nature that it can do, without being the same thing. The interest of the story increases with the dawn of understanding and reflection in the heroine: her sentiments gradually expand themselves, like opening flowers. She writes better every time, and acquires a confidence in herself, just as a girl would do writing such letters in such circumstances; and yet it is certain *that no girl would write such letters in such circumstances.* What I mean is this—Richardson's nature is always the nature of sentiment and reflection, not of impulse or situation. He furnishes his characters, on every occasion,

with the presence of mind of the author. He makes them act, not as they would from the impulse of the moment, but as they might upon reflection, and upon a careful review of every motive and circumstance in their situation. They regularly sit down to write letters; and if the business of life consisted in letter-writing, and was carried on by the post (like a Spanish game at chess), human nature would be what Richardson represents it. All actual objects and feelings are blunted and deadened by being presented through a medium which may be ture to reason, but is false in nature. He confounds his own point of view with that of the immediate actors in the scene, and hence presents you with a conventional and factitious nature, instead of that which is real. Dr. Johnson seems to have preferred this truth of reflection to the truth of nature, when he said that there was more knowledge of the human heart in a page of Richardson than in all Fielding. Fielding, however, saw more of the practical results, and understood the principles as well; but he had not the same power of speculating upon their possible results, and combining them in certain ideal forms of passion and imagination, which was Richardson's real excellence.

It must be observed, however, that it is this mutual good understanding, and comparing of notes between the author and the persons he describes: his infinite circumspection, his exact process of ratiocination and calculation, which gives such an appearance of coldness and formality to most of his characters—which makes prudes of his women, and coxcombs of his men. Everything is too conscious in his works. Everything is distinctly brought home to the mind of the actors in the scene, which is a fault undoubtedly; but then it must be confessed everything is brought home in its full force to the mind of the reader also, and we feel the same interest in the story as if it were our own. Can anything be more beautiful or more affecting than Pamela's reproaches to her "lumpish heart," when she is sent away from her master's at her own request: its lightness, when she is sent for back: the joy which the conviction of the sincerity of his love diffuses in her heart, like the coming on of spring; the artifice of the stuff gown: the meeting with Lady Davers after her marriage: and the trial-scene with her husband? Who ever remained insensible to the passion of Lady Clementina, except Sir Charles Grandison himself, who was the object of it? Clarissa is, however, his masterpiece, if we except Lovelace. If she is fine in herself, she is still finer in his account of her. With that foil her purity is dazzling indeed; and she who could triumph by her virtue and the force of her love over the regality of Lovelace's mind, his

wit, his person, his accomplishments, and his spirit, conquers all hearts. I should suppose that never sympathy more deep or sincere was excited than by the heroine of Richardson's romance, except by the calamities of real life. The links in this wonderful chain of interest are not more finely wrought than their whole weight is overwhelming and irresistible. Who can forget the exquisite gradations of her long dying scene, or the closing of the coffin-lid, when Miss Howe comes to take her last leave of her friend; or the heart-breaking reflection that Clarissa makes on what was to have been her wedding-day? Well does a certain writer exclaim—

> "Books are a real world, both pure and good,
> Round which, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
> Our pastime and our happiness may grow!"

Richardson's wit was unlike that of any other writer: his humour was so too. Both were the effect of intense activity of mind: laboured, and yet completely effectual. I might refer to Lovelace's reception and description of Hickman, when he calls out Death in his ear, as the name of the person with whom Clarissa had fallen in love, and to the scene at the glove-shop. What can be more magnificent than his enumeration of his companions—"Belton, so pert and so pimply: Tourville, so fair and so foppish," &c.? In casuistry this author is quite at home; and with a boldness greater even than his puritanical severity, [he] has exhausted every topic on virtue and vice. There is another peculiarity in Richardson not perhaps so uncommon, which is his systematically preferring his most insipid characters to his finest, though both were equally his own invention, and he must be supposed to have understood something of their qualities. Thus he preferred the little, selfish, affected, insignificant Miss Byron to the divine Clementina, and, again, Sir Charles Grandison to the nobler Lovelace. I have nothing to say in favour of Lovelace's morality; but Sir Charles is the prince of coxcombs, whose eye was never once taken from his own person and his own virtues, and there is nothing which excites so little sympathy as this excessive egotism.

It remains to speak of Sterne; and I shall do it in few words. There is more of *mannerism* and affectation in him, and a more immediate reference to preceding authors; but his excellences, where he is excellent, are of the first order. His characters are intellectual and inventive, like Richardson's, but totally opposite in the execution. The one is made out by continuity and patient repetition of touches: the others, by glancing transitions and graceful apposition. His style is equally different from Richardson's: it is at times the

most rapid, the most happy, the most idiomatic of any that is to be found. It is the pure essence of English conversational style. His works consist only of *morceaux*—of brilliant passages. I wonder that Goldsmith, who ought to have known better, should call him "a dull fellow." His wit is poignant, though artificial; and his characters (though the groundwork of some of them had been laid before) have yet invaluable original differences; and the spirit of the execution, the master-strokes constantly thrown into them, are not to be surpassed. It is sufficient to name them:—Yorick, Dr. Slop, Mr. Shandy, My Uncle Toby, Trim, Susanna, and the Widow Wadman. In these he has contrived to oppose with equal felicity and originality two characters, one of pure intellect, and the other of pure good-nature, in My Father and My Uncle Toby. There appears to have been in Sterne a vein of dry, sarcastic humour, and of extreme tenderness of feeling; the latter sometimes carried to affectation, as in the tale of "Maria" and the apostrophe to the recording angel; but at other times pure and without blemish. The story of Le Fevre is perhaps the finest in the English language. My Father's restlessness, both of body and mind, is inimitable. It is the model from which all those despicable performances against modern philosophy ought to have been copied, if their authors had known anything of the subject they were writing about. My Uncle Toby is one of the finest compliments ever paid to human nature. He is the most unoffending of God's creatures; or, as the French express it, *un tel petit bon homme!* Of his bowling-green, his sieges, and his amours, who would say or think anything amiss? . . .

In knowledge, in variety, in facility, in truth of painting, in costume and scenery, in freshness of subject and in untired interest, in glancing lights and the graces of a style passing at will from grave to gay, from lively to severe, at once romantic and familiar, having the utmost force of imitation and apparent freedom of invention, the Waverley novels have the highest claims to admiration. What lack they yet? The author has all power given him from without—he has not, perhaps, an equal power from within. The intensity of the feeling is not equal to the distinctness of the imagery. He sits like a magician in his cell, and conjures up all shapes and sights to the view; and with a little variation we might apply to him what Spenser says of Fancy:—

> "His chamber was depainted all within
> With sundry colours, in which were writ
> Infinite shape of things dispersed thin;
> Some such as in the world were never yet;

Some daily seen and knowen by their names,
Such as in idle fantasies do flit;
Infernal hags, centaurs, fiends, hippodames,
Apes, liones, eagles, owls, fools, lovers, children, dames."

In the midst of all this phantasmagoria, the author himself never appears to take part with his characters, to prompt our affection to the good or sharpen our antipathy to the bad. It is the perfection of art to conceal art; and this is here done so completely, that while it adds to our pleasure in the work, it seems to take away from the merit of the author. As he does not thrust himself forward in the foreground, he loses the credit of the performance. The copies are so true to nature, that they appear like tapestry figures taken off by the pattern—the obvious patchwork of tradition and history. His characters are transplanted at once from their native soil to the page which we are reading, without any traces of their having passed through the hotbed of the author's genius or vanity. He leaves them as he found them; but this is doing wonders. The Laird and the Bailie of Bradwardine, the idiot rhymer David Gellatly, Miss Rose Bradwardine and Miss Flora Mac Ivor, her brother the Highland Jacobite chieftain, Vich Ian Vohr, the Highland rover, Donald Bean Lean, and the worthy page Callum Beg, Bothwell and Balfour of Burley, Claverhouse and Macbriar, Elshie, the Black Dwarf, and the Red Reever of Westburn Flat, Hobbie and Grace Armstrong, Lucy Bertram and Dominie Sampson, Dirk Hatteraick and Meg Merrilies, are at present "familiar in our mouths as household names," and whether they are actual persons or creations of the poet's pen is an impertinent inquiry. The picturesque and local scenery is as fresh as the lichen on the rock: the characters are a part of the scenery. If they are put in action, it is a moving picture: if they speak, we hear their dialect and the tones of their voice. If the humour is made out by dialect, the character by the dress, the interest by the facts and documents in the author's possession, we have no right to complain, if it is made out; but sometimes it hardly is, and then we have a right to say so. For instance, in the "Tales of my Landlord," Canny Elshie is not in himself so formidable or petrific a person as the real Black Dwarf, called David Ritchie, nor are his acts or sayings so staggering to the imagination. Again, the first introduction of this extraordinary personage, groping about among the hoary twilight ruins of the Witch of Micklestane Moor and her Grey Geese, is as full of preternatural power and bewildering effect (according to the tradition of the country) as can be; while the last decisive scene, where the Dwarf, in his resumed character of Sir Edward Mauley, comes from the tomb in the chapel, to prevent the forced

marriage of the daughter of his former betrothed mistress with the man she abhors, is altogether powerless and tame. No situation could be imagined more finely calculated to call forth an author's powers of imagination and passion; but nothing is done. The assembly is dispersed under circumstances of the strongest natural feeling and the most appalling preternatural appearances, just as if the effect had been produced by a peace-officer entering for the same purpose. These instances of a falling off are, however, rare; and if this author should not be supposed by fastidious critics to have original genius in the highest degree, he has other qualities which supply its place so well: his materials are so rich and varied, and he uses them so lavishly, that the reader is no loser by the exchange. We are not in fear that he should publish another novel; we are under no apprehension of his exhausting himself, for he has shown that he is inexhaustible.

[*Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*, 1821. *Second Edition*, 1821. *Third Edition*, 1840. *Fourth Edition*, 1873.]

GENERAL VIEW OF THE SUBJECT.

THE age of Elizabeth was distinguished beyond, perhaps, any other in our history by a number of great men, famous in different ways, and whose names have come down to us with unblemished honours: statesmen, warriors, divines, scholars, poets, and philosophers; Raleigh, Drake, Coke, Hooker, and—high and more sounding still, and still more frequent in our mouths—Shakspeare, Spenser, Sidney, Bacon, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, men whom Fame has eternised in her long and lasting scroll, and who, by their words and acts, were benefactors of their country and ornaments of human nature. Their attainments of different kinds bore the same general stamp, and it was sterling; what they did had the mark of their age and country upon it. Perhaps the genius of Great Britain never shone out fuller or brighter, or looked more like itself, than at this period. Our writers and great men had something in them that savoured of the soil from which they grew: they were not French; they were not Dutch, or German, or Greek, or Latin; they were truly English. They did not look out of themselves to see what they should be; they sought for truth and nature, and found it in themselves. There was no tinsel, and but little art; they were not the spoilt children of affectation and refinement, but a bold, vigorous, inde-

pendent race of thinkers, with prodigious strength and energy, with none but natural grace and heart-felt, unobtrusive delicacy. They were not at all sophisticated. The mind of their country was great in them, and it prevailed. With their learning and unexampled acquirement, they did not forget that they were men: with all their endeavours after excellence, they did not lay aside the strong original bent and character of their minds. What they performed was chiefly nature's handiwork; and Time has claimed it for his own. To these, however, might be added others not less learned, nor with a scarce less happy vein, but less fortunate in the event, who, though as renowned in their day, have sunk into "mere oblivion," and of whom the only record (but that the noblest) is to be found in their works. Their works and their names, "poor, poor dumb names," are all that remains of such men as Webster, Decker, Marston, Marlowe, Chapman, Heywood, Middleton, and Rowley! "How lov'd, how honour'd once, avails them not:" though they were the friends and fellow-labourers of Shakspeare, sharing his fame and fortunes with him, the rivals of Jonson, and the masters of Beaumont and Fletcher's well-sung woes! They went out one by one unnoticed, like evening lights, or were swallowed up in the headlong torrent of puritanic zeal which succeeded, and swept away everything in its unsparing course, throwing up the wrecks of taste and genius at random, and at long fitful intervals, amidst the painted gewgaws and foreign frippery of the reign of Charles II., and from which we are only now recovering the scattered fragments and broken images to erect a temple to true Fame! How long before it will be completed?

If I can do anything to rescue some of these writers from hopeless obscurity, and to do them right, without prejudice to well-deserved reputation, I shall have succeeded in what I chiefly propose. I shall not attempt, indeed, to adjust the spelling or restore the pointing, as if the genius of poetry lay hid in errors of the press, but, leaving these weightier matters of criticism to those who are more able and willing to bear the burden, try to bring out their real beauties to the eager sight, "draw the curtain of Time, and show the picture of Genius," restraining my own admiration within reasonable bounds!

There is not a lower ambition, a poorer way of thought, than that which would confine all excellence, or arrogate its final accomplishment, to the present or modern times. We ordinarily speak and think of those who had the misfortune to write or live before us as labouring under very singular privations and disadvantages in not having the benefit of those improvements which we have made,

as buried in the grossest ignorance, or the slaves "of poring pedantry;" and we make a cheap and infallible estimate of their progress in civilisation upon a graduated scale of perfectibility, calculated from the meridian of our own times. If we have pretty well got rid of the narrow bigotry that would limit all sense or virtue to our own country, and have fraternised, like true cosmopolites, with our neighbours and contemporaries, we have made our self-love amends by letting the generation we live in engross nearly all our admiration, and by pronouncing a sweeping sentence of barbarism and ignorance on our ancestry backwards, from the commencement (as near as can be) of the nineteenth or the latter end of the eighteenth century. From thence we date a new era, the dawn of our own intellect and that of the world, like "the sacred influence of light" glimmering on the confines of Chaos and old night; new manners rise, and all the cumbrous "pomp of elder days" vanishes, and is lost in worse than Gothic darkness. Pavilioned in the glittering pride of our superficial accomplishments and upstart pretensions, we fancy that everything beyond that magic circle is prejudice and error, and all before the present enlightened period but a dull and useless blank in the great map of Time. We are so dazzled with the gloss and novelty of modern discoveries, that we cannot take into our mind's eye the vast expanse, the lengthened perspective of human intellect, and a cloud hangs over and conceals its loftiest monuments, if they are removed to a little distance from us—the cloud of our own vanity and short-sightedness. The modern sciolist *stultifies* all understanding but his own, and that which he conceives like his own. We think, in this age of reason and consummation of philosophy, because we knew nothing twenty or thirty years ago, and began to think then, for the first time in our lives, that the rest of mankind were in the same predicament, and never knew anything till we did; that the world had grown old in sloth and ignorance, had dreamt out its long minority of five thousand years in a dozing state, and that it first began to wake out of sleep, to rouse itself, and look about it, startled by the light of our unexpected discoveries, and the noise we made about them. Strange error of our infatuated self-love! Because the clothes we remember to have seen worn when we were children are now out of fashion, and our grandmothers were then old women, we conceive, with magnanimous continuity of reasoning, that it must have been much worse three hundred years before, and that grace, youth, and beauty are things of modern date—as if nature had ever been old, or the sun had first shone on our folly and presumption. Because, in a word, the last generation, when tottering off the stage, were not so active, so

sprightly, and so promising as we were, we begin to imagine that people formerly must have crawled about in a feeble, torpid state, like flies in winter, in a sort of dim twilight of the understanding; "nor can we think what thoughts they could conceive," in the absence of all those topics that so agreeably enliven and diversify our conversation and literature, mistaking the imperfection of our knowledge for the defect of their organs, as if it was necessary for us to have a register and certificate of their thoughts, or as if, because they did not see with our eyes, hear with our ears, and understand with our understandings, they could hear, see, and understand nothing. A falser inference could not be drawn, nor one more contrary to the maxims and cautions of a wise humanity. "Think," says Shakspeare, the prompter of good and true feelings, "there's livers out of Britain." So there have been thinkers, and great and sound ones, before our time. They had the same capacities that we have, sometimes greater motives for their exertion, and, for the most part, the same subject-matter to work upon. What we learn from nature, we may hope to do as well as they; what we learn from them, we may in general expect to do worse. What is, I think, as likely as anything to cure us of this overweening admiration of the present and unmingled contempt for past times is the looking at the finest old pictures: at Raphael's heads, at Titian's faces, at Claude's landscapes. We have there the evidence of the senses, without the alterations of opinion or disguise of language. We there see the blood circulate through the veins (long before it was known that it did so), the same red and white "by Nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on," the same thoughts passing through the mind and seated on the lips, the same blue sky and glittering sunny vales, "where Pan, knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance, leads on the eternal spring." And we begin to feel that nature and the mind of man are not a thing of yesterday, as we had been led to suppose, and that "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy." Or grant that we improve, in some respects, in a uniformly progressive ratio, and build, Babel-high, on the foundation of other men's knowledge, as in matters of science and speculative inquiry, where, by going often over the same general ground, certain general conclusions have been arrived at, and in the number of persons reasoning on a given subject truth has at last been hit upon and long-established error exploded; yet this does not apply to cases of individual power and knowledge, to a million of things beside, in which we are still to seek as much as ever, and in which we can only hope to find by going to the fountain-head of thought and experience. We are

quite wrong in supposing (as we are apt to do) that we can plead an exclusive title to wit and wisdom, to taste and genius, as the net produce and clear reversion of the age we live in, and that all we have to do to be great is to despise those who have gone before us as nothing. . . .

It is the present fashion to speak with veneration of old English literature; but the homage we pay to it is more akin to the rites of superstition than the worship of true religion. Our faith is doubtful, our love cold, our knowledge little or none. We now and then repeat the names of some of the old writers by rote; but we are shy of looking into their works. Though we seem disposed to think highly of them, and to give them every credit for a masculine and original vein of thought, as a matter of literary courtesy and enlargement of taste, we are afraid of coming to the proof, as too great a trial of our candour and patience. We regard the enthusiastic admiration of these obsolete authors, or a desire to make proselytes to a belief in their extraordinary merits, as an amiable weakness, a pleasing delusion, and prepare to listen to some favourite passage that may be referred to in support of this singular taste with an incredulous smile; and are in no small pain for the result of the hazardous experiment, feeling much the same awkward condescending disposition to patronise these first crude attempts at poetry and lispings of the Muse as when a fond parent brings forward a bashful child to make a display of its wit or learning. We hope the best, put a good face on the matter, but are sadly afraid the thing cannot answer. Dr. Johnson said of these writers generally, that "they were sought after because they were scarce, and would not have been scarce had they been much esteemed." His decision is neither true history nor sound criticism. They were esteemed, and they deserved to be so.

One cause that might be pointed out here as having contributed to the long-continued neglect of our earlier writers lies in the very nature of our academic institutions, which unavoidably neutralises a taste for the productions of native genius, estranges the mind from the history of our own literature, and makes it in each successive age like a book sealed. The Greek and Roman classics are a sort of privileged text-books, the standing order of the day, in a university education, and leave little leisure for a competent acquaintance with or due admiration of a whole host of able writers of our own, who are suffered to moulder in obscurity on the shelves of our libraries, with a decent reservation of one or two top-names, that are cried up for form's sake, and to save the national character. Thus we keep a few of these always ready in capitals, and strike off

the rest, to prevent the tendency to a superfluous population in the republic of letters; in other words, to prevent the writers from becoming more numerous than the readers. The ancients are become effete in this respect: they no longer increase and multiply; or, if they have imitators among us, no one is expected to read, and still less to admire, them. It is not possible that the learned professors and the reading public should clash in this way, or necessary for them to use any precautions against each other. But it is not the same with the living languages, where there is danger of being overwhelmed by the crowd of competitors; and pedantry has combined with ignorance to cancel their unsatisfied claims.

We affect to wonder at Shakspeare and one or two more of that period, as solitary instances upon record; whereas it is our own dearth of information that makes the waste; for there is no time more populous of intellect or more prolific of intellectual wealth than the one we are speaking of. Shakspeare did not look upon himself in this light, as a sort of monster of poetical genius, or on his contemporaries as "less than smallest dwarfs," when he speaks with true, not false, modesty of himself and them and of his wayward thoughts, "desiring this man's art, and that man's scope." We fancy that there were no such men that could either add to or take anything away from him, but such there were. He indeed overlooks and commands the admiration of posterity, but he does it from the *tableland* of the age in which he lived. He towered above his fellows, "in shape and gesture proudly eminent;" but he was one of a race of giants—the tallest, the strongest, the most graceful and beautiful of them. But it was a common and a noble brood. He was not something sacred and aloof from the vulgar herd of men, but shook hands with Nature and the circumstances of the time, and is distinguished from his immediate contemporaries, not in kind, but in degree and greater variety of excellence. He did not form a class or species by himself, but belonged to a class or species. His age was necessary to him; nor could he have been wrenched from his place, in the edifice of which he was so conspicuous a part, without equal injury to himself and it. Mr. Wordsworth says of Milton, that "his soul was like a star, and dwelt apart." This cannot be said with any propriety of Shakspeare, who certainly moved in a constellation of bright luminaries, and "drew after him a third part of the heavens." If we allow, for argument's sake (or for truth's, which is better), that he was in himself equal to all his competitors put together, yet there was more dramatic excellence in that age than in the whole of the period that has elapsed since. If his contemporaries, with their

united strength, would hardly make one Shakspeare, certain it is that all his successors would not make half a one. With the exception of a single writer, Otway, and of a single play of his ("Venice Preserved"), there is nobody in tragedy and dramatic poetry (I do not here speak of comedy) to be compared to the great men of the age of Shakspeare and immediately after. They are a mighty phalanx of kindred spirits closing him round, moving in the same orbit, and impelled by the same causes in their whirling and eccentric career. They had the same faults and the same excellences; the same strength and depth and richness; the same truth of character, passion, imagination, thought, and language, thrown, heaped, massed together without careful polishing or exact method, but poured out in unconcerned profusion from the lap of Nature and Genius in boundless and unrivalled magnificence. The sweetness of Decker, the thought of Marston, the gravity of Chapman, the grace of Fletcher and his young-eyed wit, Jonson's learned sock, the flowing vein of Middleton, Heywood's ease, the pathos of Webster, and Marlowe's deep designs, add a double lustre to the sweetness, thought, gravity, grace, wit, artless nature, copiousness, ease, pathos, and sublime conceptions of Shakspeare's Muse. They are indeed the scale by which we can best ascend to the true knowledge and love of him. Our admiration of them does not lessen our relish for him, but, on the contrary, increases and confirms it. For such an extraordinary combination and development of fancy and genius many causes may be assigned; and we may seek for the chief of them in religion, in politics, in the circumstances of the time, the recent diffusion of letters, in local situation, and in the character of the men who adorned that period, and availed themselves so nobly of the advantages placed within their reach.

I shall here attempt to give a general sketch of these causes, and of the manner in which they operated to mould and stamp the poetry of the country at the period of which I have to treat, independently of incidental and fortuitous causes, for which there is no accounting, but which, after all, have often the greatest share in determining the most important results.

The first cause I shall mention as contributing to this general effect was the Reformation, which had just then taken place. This event gave a mighty impulse and increased activity to thought and inquiry, and agitated the inert mass of accumulated prejudices throughout Europe. The effect of the concussion was general; but the shock was greatest in this country. It toppled down the full-grown, intolerable abuses of centuries at a blow; heaved the ground from under the feet of bigoted faith and slavish obedience; and the

roar and dashing of opinions, loosened from their accustomed hold, might be heard like the noise of an angry sea, and has never yet subsided. Germany first broke the spell of misbegotten fear, and gave the watchword; but England joined the shout, and echoed it back with her island voice, from her thousand cliffs and craggy shores, in a longer and a louder strain. With that cry the genius of Great Britain rose, and threw down the gauntlet to the nations. There was a mighty fermentation: the waters were out; public opinion was in a state of projection. Liberty was held out to all to think and speak the truth. Men's brains were busy; their spirits stirring; their hearts full; and their hands not idle. Their eyes were opened to expect the greatest things, and their ears burned with curiosity and zeal to know the truth, that the truth might make them free. The death-blow which had been struck at scarlet vice and bloated hypocrisy loosened their tongues, and made the talismans and love-tokens of Popish superstition, with which she had beguiled her followers and committed abominations with the people, fall harmless from their necks.

The translation of the Bible was the chief engine in the great work. It threw open, by a secret spring, the rich treasures of religion and morality, which had been there locked up as in a shrine. It revealed the visions of the prophets, and conveyed the lessons of inspired teachers (such they were thought) to the meanest of the people. It gave them a common interest in the common cause. Their hearts burnt within them as they read. It gave a *mind* to the people, by giving them common subjects of thought and feeling. It cemented their union of character and sentiment; it created endless diversity and collision of opinion. They found objects to employ their faculties, and a motive in the magnitude of the consequences attached to them, to exert the utmost eagerness in the pursuit of truth, and the most daring intrepidity in maintaining it. Religious controversy sharpens the understanding by the subtlety and remoteness of the topics it discusses, and braces the will by their infinite importance. We perceive in the history of this period a nervous masculine intellect. No levity, no feebleness, no indifference; or, if there were, it is a relaxation from the intense activity which gives a tone to its general character. But there is a gravity approaching to piety; a seriousness of impression, a conscientious severity of argument, an habitual fervour and enthusiasm in their mode of handling almost every subject. The debates of the schoolmen were sharp and subtle enough; but they wanted interest and grandeur, and were, besides, confined to a few: they did not affect the general mass of the community. But the

Bible was thrown open to all ranks and conditions "to run and read," with its wonderful Table of Contents from Genesis to the Revelations. Every village in England would present the scene so well described in Burns's "Cotter's Saturday Night." I cannot think that all this variety and weight of knowledge could be thrown in all at once upon the mind of a people, and not make some impression upon it, the traces of which might be discerned in the manners and literature of the age. For to leave more disputable points, and take only the historical parts of the Old Testament, or the moral sentiments of the New, there is nothing like them in the power of exciting awe and admiration, or of riveting sympathy. We see what Milton has made of the account of the Creation, from the manner in which he has treated it, imbued and impregnated with the spirit of the time of which we speak. Or what is there equal (in that romantic interest and patriarchal simplicity which goes to the heart of a country, and rouses it, as it were, from its lair in wastes and wildernesses) to the story of Joseph and his Brethren, of Rachel and Laban, of Jacob's Dream, of Ruth and Boaz, the descriptions in the Book of Job, the deliverance of the Jews out of Egypt, or the account of their captivity and return from Babylon? There is in all these parts of the Scripture, and numberless more of the same kind, to pass over the Orphic hymns of David, the prophetic denunciations of Isaiah, or the gorgeous visions of Ezekiel, an originality, a vastness of conception, a depth and tenderness of feeling, and a touching simplicity in the mode of narration, which he who does not feel need be made of no "penetrable stuff." There is something in the character of Christ, too (leaving religious faith quite out of the question), of more sweetness and majesty, and more likely to work a change in the mind of man, by the contemplation of its idea alone, than any to be found in history, whether actual or feigned. This character is that of a sublime humanity, such as was never seen on earth before nor since. This shone manifestly both in His words and actions. We see it in His washing the disciples' feet the night before His death, that unspeakable instance of humility and love, above all art, all meanness, and all pride, and in the leave He took of them on that occasion: "My peace I give unto you; that peace which the world cannot give, give I unto you;" and in His last commandment, that "they should love one another." Who can read the account of His behaviour on the cross, when, turning to His mother, He said, "Woman, behold thy son," and to the disciple John, "Behold thy mother," and "from that hour that disciple took her to his own home," without having his heart smote within him? We see it in His treatment of

the woman taken in adultery, and in His excuse for the woman who poured precious ointment on His garment as an offering of devotion and love, which is here all in all. His religion was the religion of the heart. We see it in His discourse with the disciples as they walked together towards Emmaus, when their hearts burned within them; in His Sermon from the Mount, in His parable of the Good Samaritan, and in that of the Prodigal Son—in every act and word of His life a grace, a mildness, a dignity and love, a patience and wisdom worthy of the Son of God. His whole life and being were imbued, steeped in this word, *charity;* it was the spring, the well-head from which every thought and feeling gushed into act; and it was this that breathed a mild glory from His face in that last agony upon the cross, "when the meek Saviour bowed His head and died," praying for His enemies. He was the first true teacher of morality; for He alone conceived the idea of a pure humanity. He redeemed man from the worship of that idol, self, and instructed him by precept and example to love his neighbour as himself, to forgive our enemies, to do good to those that curse us and despitefully use us. He taught the love of good for the sake of good, without regard to personal or sinister views, and made the affections of the heart the sole seat of morality, instead of the pride of the understanding or the sternness of the will. In answering the question, "Who is our neighbour?" as one who stands in need of our assistance, and whose wounds we can bind up, He has done more to humanise the thoughts and tame the unruly passions than all who have tried to reform and benefit mankind. The very idea of abstract benevolence, of the desire to do good because another wants our services, and of regarding the human race as one family, the offspring of one common parent, is hardly to be found in any other code or system. It was "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." The Greeks and Romans never thought of considering others, but as they were Greeks or Romans, as they were bound to them by certain positive ties, or, on the other hand, as separated from them by fiercer antipathies. Their virtues were the virtues of political machines; their vices were the vices of demons, ready to inflict or to endure pain with obdurate and remorseless inflexibility of purpose. But in the Christian religion "we perceive a softness coming over the heart of a nation, and the iron scales that fence and harden it melt and drop off." It becomes malleable, capable of pity, of forgiveness, of relaxing in its claims and remitting its power. We strike it, and is does not hurt us: it is not steel or marble, but flesh and blood, clay tempered with tears, and "soft as sinews of the new-born babe." The Gospel was first preached to the poor, for it consulted their

wants and interests, not its own pride and arrogance. It first promulgated the equality of mankind in the community of duties and benefits. It denounced the iniquities of the chief priests and Pharisees, and declared itself at variance with principalities and powers, for it sympathises not with the oppressor but the oppressed. It first abolished slavery, for it did not consider the power of the will to inflict injury as clothing it with a right to do so. Its law is good, not power. It at the same time tended to wean the mind from the grossness of sense, and a particle of its divine flame was lent to brighten and purify the lamp of love!

There have been persons who, being sceptics as to the Divine mission of Christ, having taken an unaccountable prejudice to His doctrines, and have been disposed to deny the merit of His character; but this was not the feeling of the great men in the age of Elizabeth (whatever might be their belief), one of whom says of Him, with a boldness equal to its piety:

> "The best of men
> That e'er wore earth about Him was a sufferer;
> A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit;
> The first true gentleman that ever breathed."

This was old honest Decker, and the lines ought to embalm his memory to every one who has a sense either of religion, or philosophy, or humanity, or true genius. Nor can I help thinking that we may discern the traces of the influence exerted by religious faith in the spirit of the poetry of the age of Elizabeth, in the means of exciting terror and pity, in the delineation of the passions of grief, remorse, love, sympathy, the sense of shame, in the fond desires, the longings after immortality, in the heaven of hope and the abyss of despair it lays open to us.

The literature of this age, then, I would say, was strongly influenced (among other causes), first by the spirit of Christianity, and secondly by the spirit of Protestantism.

The effects of the Reformation on politics and philosophy may be seen in the writings and history of the next and of the following ages. They are still at work, and will continue to be so. The effects on the poetry of the time were chiefly confined to the moulding of the character, and giving a powerful impulse to the intellect of the country. The immediate use or application that was made of religion to subjects of imagination and fiction was not (from an obvious ground of separation) so direct or frequent as that which was made of the classical and romantic literature.

For much about the same time, the rich and fascinating stores of the Greek and Roman mythology, and those of the romantic poetry

of Spain and Italy, were eagerly explored by the curious, and thrown open in translations to the admiring gaze of the vulgar. This last circumstance could hardly have afforded so much advantage to the poets of that day, who were themselves, in fact, the translators, as it shows the general curiosity and increasing interest in such subjects as a prevailing feature of the times. There were translations of Tasso by Fairfax, and of Ariosto by Harrington, of Homer and Hesiod by Chapman, and of Virgil long before, and Ovid soon after; there was Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch, of which Shakspeare has made such admirable use in his "Coriolanus" and "Julius Cæsar;" and Ben Jonson's tragedies of "Catiline" and "Sejanus" may themselves be considered as almost literal translations into verse of Tacitus, Sallust, and Cicero's "Orations" in his consulship. Boccaccio, the divine Boccaccio, Petrarch, Dante, the satirist Aretine, Machiavel, Castiglione, and others were familiar to our writers, and they make occasional mention of some few French authors, as Ronsard and Du Bartas; for the French literature had not at this stage arrived at its Augustan period, and it was the imitation of their literature a century afterwards, when it had arrived at its greatest height (itself copied from the Greek and Latin), that enfeebled and impoverished our own. But of the time that we are considering it might be said, without much extravagance, that every breath that blew, that every wave that rolled to our shores, brought with it some accession to our knowledge, which was engrafted on the national genius. In fact, all the disposable materials that had been accumulating for a long period of time, either in our own or in foreign countries, were now brought together, and required nothing more than to be wrought up, polished, or arranged in striking forms, for ornament and use. To this every inducement prompted: the novelty of the acquisition of knowledge in many cases, the emulation of foreign wits and of immortal works, the want and the expectation of such works among ourselves, the opportunity and encouragement afforded for their production by leisure and affluence; and, above all, the insatiable desire of the mind to beget its own image, and to construct out of itself, and for the delight and admiration of the world and posterity, that excellence of which the idea exists hitherto only in its own breast, and the impression of which it would make as universal as the eye of Heaven, the benefit as common as the air we breathe. The first impulse of genius is to create what never existed before: the contemplation of that which is so created is sufficient to satisfy the demands of taste; and it is the habitual study and imitation of the original models that takes away the power and even wish to do the

like. Taste limps after genius, and from copying the artificial models we lose sight of the living principle of nature. It is the effort we make and the impulse we acquire in overcoming the first obstacles that projects us forward; it is the necessity for exertion that makes us conscious of our strength; but this necessity and this impulse once removed, the tide of fancy and enthusiasm, which is at first a running stream, soon settles and crusts into the standing pool of dulness, criticism, and *vertu*.

What also gave an unusual impetus to the mind of man at this period was the discovery of the New World and the reading of voyages and travels. Green islands and golden sands seemed to arise, as by enchantment, out of the bosom of the watery waste, and invite the cupidity or wing the imagination of the dreaming speculator. Fairyland was realised in new and unknown worlds. "Fortunate fields and groves and flowery vales, thrice happy isles," were found floating, "like those Hesperian gardens famed of old," beyond Atlantic seas, as dropped from the zenith. The people, the soil, the clime, everything gave unlimited scope to the curiosity of the traveller and reader. Other manners might be said to enlarge the bounds of knowledge, and new mines of wealth were tumbled at our feet. It is from a voyage to the Straits of Magellan that Shakspeare has taken the hint of Prospero's Enchanted Island, and of the savage Caliban with his god Setebos. Spenser seems to have had the same feeling in his mind in the production of his "Faëry Queen," and vindicates his poetic fiction on this very ground of analogy. . . .

Lastly, to conclude this account: What gave a unity and common direction to all these causes was the natural genius of the country, which was strong in these writers in proportion to their strength. We are a nation of islanders, and we cannot help it, nor mend ourselves if we would. We are something in ourselves, nothing when we try to ape others. Music and painting are not our *forte*; for what we have done in that way has been little, and that borrowed from others with great difficulty. But we may boast of our poets and philosophers. That's something. We have had strong heads and sound hearts among us. Thrown on one side of the world, and left to bustle for ourselves, we have fought out many a battle for truth and freedom. That is our natural style; and it were to be wished we had in no instance departed from it. Our situation has given us a certain cast of thought and character, and our liberty has enabled us to make the most of it. We are of a stiff clay, not moulded into every fashion, with stubborn joints not easily bent. We are slow to think, and therefore impressions do not work upon

us till they act in masses. We are not forward to express our feelings, and therefore they do not come from us till they force their way in the most impetuous eloquence. Our language is, as it were, to begin anew, and we make use of the most singular and boldest combinations to explain ourselves. Our wit comes from us, "like birdlime, brains and all." We pay too little attention to form and method, leave our works in an unfinished state, but still the materials we work in are solid and of Nature's mint; we do not deal in counterfeits. We both under and over do, but we keep an eye to the prominent features, the main chance. We are more for weight than show; care only about what interests ourselves, instead of trying to impose upon others by plausible appearances, and are obstinate and intractable in not conforming to common rules, by which many arrive at their ends with half the real waste of thought and trouble. We neglect all but the principal object, gather our force to make a great blow, bring it down, and relapse into sluggishness and indifference again. *Materiam superabat opus* cannot be said of us. We may be accused of grossness, but not of flimsiness; of extravagance, but not of affectation; of want of art and refinement, but not of a want of truth and nature. Our literature, in a word, is Gothic and grotesque, unequal and irregular, not cast in a previous mould, nor of one uniform texture, but of great weight in the whole, and of incomparable value in the best parts. It aims at an excess of beauty or power, hits or misses, and is either very good indeed or absolutely good for nothing. This character applies in particular to our literature in the age of Elizabeth, which is its best period, before the introduction of a rage for French rules and French models; for, whatever may be the value of our own original style of composition, there can be neither offence nor presumption in saying, that it is at least better than our second-hand imitations of others. Our understanding (such as it is and must remain to be good for anything) is not a thoroughfare for commonplaces, smooth as the palm of one's hand, but full of knotty points and jutting excrescences, rough, uneven, overgrown with brambles; and I like this aspect of the mind (as some one said of the country), where nature keeps a good deal of the soil in her own hands. Perhaps the genius of our poetry has more of Pan than of Apollo; "but Pan is a god, Apollo is no more!"

WEBSTER AND DECKER.

It remains for me to say something of Webster and Decker. For these two writers I do not know how to show my regard and admira-

tion sufficiently. Noble-minded Webster, gentle-hearted Decker, how may I hope to "express ye unblamed," and repay to your neglected manes some part of the debt of gratitude I owe for proud and soothing recollections? I pass by the "Appius and Virginia" of the former, which is, however, a good, sensible, solid tragedy, cast in a framework of the most approved models, with little to blame or praise in it, except the affecting speech of Appius to Virginia just before he kills her; as well as Decker's "Wonder of a Kingdom," his Jacomo Gentili, that truly ideal character of a magnificent patron, and Old Fortunatus and his Wishing-cap, which last has the idle garrulity of age, with the freshness and gaiety of youth still upon its cheek and in its heart. These go into the common catalogue, and are lost in the crowd; but Webster's "Vittoria Corombona" I cannot so soon part with; and old honest Decker's Signor Orlando Friscobaldo I shall never forget! I became only of late acquainted with this last-mentioned worthy character, but the bargain between us is, I trust, for life. We sometimes regret that we had not sooner met with characters like these, that seem to raise, revive, and give a new zest to our being. Vain the complaint! We should never have known their value if we had not known them always: they are old, very old acquaintance, or we should not recognise them at first sight. We only find in books what is already written within "the red-leaved tables of our hearts." The pregnant materials are there; "the pangs, the internal pangs are ready; and poor humanity's afflicted will struggling in vain with ruthless destiny." But the reading of fine poetry may indeed open the bleeding wounds, or pour balm and consolation into them, or sometimes even close them up for ever! . . .

THE EARLY DRAMATISTS—APOSTROPHE.

. . . In short, the great characteristic of the elder dramatic writers is, that there is nothing theatrical about them. In reading them you only think how the persons into whose mouths certain sentiments are put would have spoken or looked: in reading Dryden and others of that school you only think, as the authors themselves seem to have done, how they would be ranted on the stage by some buskined hero or tragedy-queen. In this respect, indeed, some of his more obscure contemporaries have the advantage over Shakspeare himself, inasmuch as we have never seen their works represented on the stage; and there is no stage-trick to remind us of it. The characters of their heroes have not been cut down to fit into the prompt-book, nor have we ever seen their names flaring in the play-bills in small

or large capitals. I do not mean to speak disrespectfully of the stage; but I think still higher of nature, and next to that, of books. They are the nearest to our thoughts: they wind into the heart; the poet's verse slides into the current of our blood. We read them when young; we remember them when old. We read there of what has happened to others; we feel that it has happened to ourselves. They are to be had everywhere cheap and good. We breathe but the air of books: we owe everything to their authors, on this side barbarism; and we pay them easily with contempt while living, and with an epitaph when dead! Michael Angelo is beyond the Alps; Mrs. Siddons has left the stage, and us to mourn her loss. Were it not so, there are neither picture-galleries nor theatres-royal on Salisbury Plain, where I write this; but here, even here, with a few old authors, I can manage to get through the summer or the winter months without ever knowing what it is to feel *ennui*. They sit with me at breakfast; they walk out with me before dinner. After a long walk through unfrequented tracks, after starting the hare from the fern, or hearing the wing of the raven rustling above my head, or being greeted by the woodman's "stern good-night," as he strikes into his narrow homeward path, I can "take mine ease at mine inn," beside the blazing hearth, and shake hands with Signor Orlando Friscobaldo, as the oldest acquaintance I have. Ben Jonson, learned Chapman, Master Webster, and Master Heywood are there, and seated round, discourse the silent hours away. Shakspeare is there himself, not in Cibber's manager's coat. Spenser is hardly yet returned from a ramble through the woods, or is concealed behind a group of nymphs, fawns, and satyrs. Milton lies on the table, as on an altar, never taken up or laid down without reverence. Lyly's Endymion sleeps with the moon, that shines in at the window, and a breath of wind stirring at a distance seems a sigh from the tree under which he grew old. Faustus disputes in one corner of the room with fiendish faces, and reasons of divine astrology. Bellafront soothes Matheo, Vittoria triumphs over her judges, and old Chapman repeats one of the hymns of Homer, in his own fine translation! I should have no objection to pass my life in this manner out of the world, not thinking of it, nor it of me: neither abused by my enemies nor defended by my friends; careless of the future, but sometimes dreaming of the past, which might as well be forgotten. Mr. Wordsworth has expressed this sentiment well (perhaps I have borrowed it from him):

> "Books, dreams, are each a world; and books, we know,
> Are a substantial world, both pure and good,

Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastime and our happiness will grow.
. . . . . .
Two shall be named pre-eminently dear,
The gentle lady married to the Moor,
And heavenly Una with her milk-white lamb.

Blessings be with them and eternal praise,
The poets, who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight in deathless lays.
Oh, might my name be number'd among theirs,
Then gladly would I end my mortal days!"

I have no sort of pretension to join in the concluding wish of the last stanza; but I trust the writer feels that this aspiration of his early and highest ambition is already not unfulfilled!

BACON.

Bacon has been called (and justly) one of the wisest of mankind. The word *wisdom* characterises him more than any other. It was not that he did so much himself to advance the knowledge of man or nature, as that he saw what others had done to advance it, and what was still wanting to its full accomplishment. He stood upon the high vantage-ground of genius and learning, and traced, "as in a map the voyager his course," the long devious march of human intellect, its elevations and depressions, its windings and its errors. He had a "large discourse of reason, looking before and after." He had made an exact and extensive survey of human acquirements: he took the gauge and meter, the depths and soundings of the human capacity. He was master of the comparative anatomy of the mind of man, of the balance of power among the different faculties. He had thoroughly investigated and carefully registered the steps and processes of his own thoughts, with their irregularities and failures, their liabilities to wrong conclusions, either from the difficulties of the subject or from moral causes, from prejudice, indolence, vanity, from conscious strength or weakness; and he applied this self-knowledge on a mighty scale to the general advances or retrograde movements of the aggregate intellect of the world. He knew well what the goal and crown of moral and intellectual power was, how far men had fallen short of it, and how they came to miss it. He had an instantaneous perception of the quantity of truth or good in any given system, and of the analogy of any given result or principle to others of the same kind scattered through nature or history. His observations take in a larger range, have more pro-

fundity from the fineness of his tact, and more comprehension from the extent of his knowledge, along the line of which his imagination ran with equal celerity and certainty, than any other persons whose writings I know. He, however, seized upon these results rather by intuition than by inference: he knew them in their mixed modes and combined effects rather than by abstraction or analysis, as he explains them to others, not by resolving them into their component parts and elementary principles, so much as by illustrations drawn from other things operating in like manner and producing similar results; or as he himself has finely expressed it, "by the same footsteps of Nature treading or printing upon several subjects or matters." He had great sagacity of observation, solidity of judgment, and scope of fancy; in this resembling Plato and Burke, that he was a popular philosopher and a philosophical declaimer. His writings have the gravity of prose with the fervour and vividness of poetry. His sayings have the effect of axioms, are at once striking and self-evident. He views objects from the greatest height, and his reflections require a sublimity in proportion to their profundity, as in deep wells of water we see the sparkling of the highest fixed stars. The chain of thought reaches to the centre, and ascends the brightest heaven of invention. Reason in him works like an instinct, and his slightest suggestions carry the force of conviction. His opinions are judicial. His induction of particulars is alike wonderful for learning and vivacity, for curiosity and dignity, and an all-pervading intellect binds the whole together in a graceful and pleasing form. His style is equally sharp and sweet, flowing and pithy, condensed and expansive, expressing volumes in a sentence, or amplifying a single thought into pages of rich, glowing, and delightful eloquence. He had great liberality from seeing the various aspects of things (there was nothing bigoted or intolerant or exclusive about him), and yet he had firmness and decision from feeling their weight and consequences. His character was, then, an amazing insight into the limits of human knowledge and acquaintance with the landmarks of human intellect, so as to trace its past history or point out the path to future inquirers; but when he quits the ground of contemplation of what others have done or left undone to project himself into future discoveries, he becomes quaint and fantastic, instead of original. His strength was in reflection, not in production: he was the surveyor, not the builder, of the fabric of science. He had not strictly the constructive faculty. He was the principal pioneer in the march of modern philosophy, and has completed the education and discipline of the mind for the acquisition of truth, by explaining all the impediments or furtherances that can be applied to it or cleared

out of its way. In a word, he was one of the greatest men this country has to boast, and his name deserves to stand, where it is generally placed, by the side of those of our greatest writers, whether we consider the variety, the strength, or splendour of his faculties, for ornament or use. . . .

SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

Sir Thomas Browne and Bishop Taylor were two prose-writers in the succeeding age, who, for pomp and copiousness of style, might be compared to Bacon. In all other respects they were opposed to him and to one another. As Bacon seemed to bend all his thoughts to the practice of life, and to bring home the light of science to "the bosoms and businesses of men," Sir Thomas Browne seemed to be of opinion that the only business of life was to think, and that the proper object of speculation was, by darkening knowledge, to breed more speculation, and "find no end in wandering mazes lost." He chose the incomprehensible and impracticable as almost the only subjects fit for a lofty and lasting contemplation, or for the exercise of a solid faith. He cried out for an *oh altitudo* beyond the heights of revelation, and posed himself with apocryphal mysteries, as the pastime of his leisure hours. He pushes a question to the utmost verge of conjecture, that he may repose on the certainty of doubt; and he removes an object to the greatest distance from him, that he may take a high and abstracted interest in it, consider it in its relation to the sum of things, not to himself, and bewilder his understanding in the universality of its nature and the inscrutableness of its origin. His is the sublime of indifference; a passion for the abstruse and imaginary. He turns the world round for his amusement, as if it was a globe of pasteboard. He looks down on sublunary affairs as if he had taken his station in one of the planets. The antipodes are next-door neighbours to him, and doomsday is not far off. With a thought he embraces both the poles; the march of his pen is over the great divisions of geography and chronology. Nothing touches him nearer than humanity. He feels that he is mortal only in the decay of nature and the dust of long-forgotten tombs. The finite is lost in the infinite. The orbits of the heavenly bodies or the history of empires are to him but a point in time or a speck in the universe. The great Platonic year revolves in one of his periods. Nature is too little for the grasp of his style. He scoops an antithesis out of fabulous antiquity, and rakes up an epithet from the sweepings of chaos. It is as if his books had dropped from the clouds, or as if Friar Bacon's head could speak.

He stands on the edge of the world of sense and reason, and gains a vertigo by looking down at impossibilities and chimeras. Or he busies himself with the mysteries of the Cabala or the enclosed secrets of the heavenly quincunxes, as children are amused with tales of the nursery. The passion of curiosity (the only passion of childhood) had in him survived to old age, and had superannuated his other faculties. He moralises and grows pathetic on a mere idle fancy of his own, as if thought and being were the same, or as if "all this world were one glorious lie." For a thing to have ever had a name is sufficient warrant to entitle it to respectful belief, and to invest it with all the rights of a subject and its predicates. He is superstitious, but not bigoted: to him all religions are much the same, and he says that he should not like to have lived in the time of Christ and the apostles, as it would have rendered his faith too gross and palpable. His gossiping egotism and personal character have been preferred unjustly to Montaigne's. He had no personal character at all, but the peculiarity of resolving all the other elements of his being into thought, and of trying experiments on his own nature in an exhausted receiver of idle and unsatisfactory speculations. All that he "differences himself by," to use his own expression, is this moral and physical indifference. In describing himself, he deals only in negatives. He says he has neither prejudices nor antipathies to manners, habits, climate, food, to persons or things; they were alike acceptable to him, as they afforded new topics for reflection; and he even professes that he could never bring himself heartily to hate the devil. He owns in one place of the "Religio Medici," that "he could be content if the species were continued like trees," and yet he declares that this was from no aversion to love, or beauty, or harmony; and the reasons he assigns to prove the orthodoxy of his taste in this respect is, that he was an admirer of the music of the spheres! He tells us that he often composed a comedy in his sleep. It would be curious to know the subject or the texture of the plot. It must have been something like Nabbes's "Mask of Microcosmus," of which the *dramatis personæ* have been already given; or else a misnomer, like Dante's "Divine Comedy of Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory." He was twice married, as if to show his disregard even for his own theory; and he had a hand in the execution of some old women for witchcraft, I suppose, to keep a decorum in absurdity, and to indulge an agreeable horror at his own fantastical reveries on the occasion. In a word, his mind seemed to converse chiefly with the intelligible forms, the spectral apparitions of things; he delighted in the preternatural and visionary, and he only existed at the circumference of his nature. He

had the most intense consciousness of contradictions and nonentities, and he decks them out in the pride and pedantry of words as if they were the attire of his proper person: the categories hang about his neck like the golden chain of knighthood, and he "walks gowned" in the intricate folds and sweeping drapery of dark sayings and impenetrable riddles! . . .

JEREMY TAYLOR.

JEREMY TAYLOR was a writer as different from Sir Thomas Browne as it was possible for one writer to be from another. He was a dignitary of the Church, and except in matters of casuistry and controverted points, could not be supposed to enter upon speculative doubts or give a loose to a sort of dogmatical scepticism. He had less thought, less "stuff of the conscience," less "to give us pause," in his impetuous oratory, but he had equal fancy—not the same vastness and profundity, but more richness and beauty, more warmth and tenderness. He is as rapid, as flowing and endless, as the other is stately, abrupt, and concentrated. The eloquence of the one is like a river, that of the other is more like an aqueduct. The one is as sanguine as the other is saturnine in the temper of his mind. Jeremy Taylor took obvious and admitted truths for granted, and illustrated them with an inexhaustible display of new and enchanting imagery. Sir Thomas Browne talks in sum-totals: Jeremy Taylor enumerates all the particulars of a subject. He gives every aspect it will bear, and never "cloys with sameness." His characteristic is enthusiastic and delightful amplification. Sir Thomas Browne gives the beginning and end of things, that you may judge of their place and magnitude: Jeremy Taylor describes their qualities and texture, and enters into all the items of the debtor and creditor account between life and death, grace and nature, faith and good works. He puts his heart into his fancy. He does not pretend to annihilate the passions and pursuits of mankind in the pride of philosophic indifference, but treats them as serious and momentous things, warring with conscience and the soul's health, or furnishing the means of grace and hopes of glory. In his writings, the frail stalk of human life reclines on the bosom of eternity. His "Holy Living and Dying" is a divine pastoral. He writes to the faithful followers of Christ, as the shepherd pipes to his flock. He introduces touching and heartfelt appeals to familiar life; condescends to men of low estate; and his pious page blushes with modesty and beauty. His style is prismatic. It unfolds the colours of the rainbow; it floats like the bubble through the air; it is like innumerable dew-

drops that glitter on the face of morning, and tremble as they glitter. He does not dig his way underground, but slides upon ice, borne on the winged car of fancy. The dancing light he throws upon objects is like an aurora borealis, playing betwixt heaven and earth:

> "Where pure Niemi's faëry banks arise,
> And fringed with roses Tenglio rolls its stream."

His exhortations to piety and virtue are a gay *memento mori*. He mixes up death's-heads and amaranthine flowers; makes life a procession to the grave, but crowns it with gaudy garlands, and "rains sacrificial roses" on its path. In a word, his writings are more like fine poetry than any other prose whatever; they are a choral song in praise of virtue, and a hymn to the Spirit of the Universe.

CONCLUSION.

I HAVE done: and if I have done no better, the fault has been in me, not in the subject. My liking to this grew with my knowledge of it; but so did my anxiety to do it justice. I somehow felt it as a point of honour not to make my hearers think less highly of some of these old writers than I myself did of them. If I have praised an author, it was because I liked him: if I have quoted a passage, it was because it pleased me in the reading: if I have spoken contemptuously of any one, it has been reluctantly. It is no easy task that a writer, even in so humble a class as myself, takes upon him; he is scouted and ridiculed if he fails; and if he succeeds, the enmity and cavils and malice with which he is assailed are just in proportion to his success. The coldness and jealousy of his friends not infrequently keep pace with the rancour of his enemies. They do not like you a bit the better for fulfilling the good opinion they always entertained of you. They would wish you to be always promising a great deal, and doing nothing, that they may answer for the performance. That shows their sagacity and does not hurt their vanity. An author wastes his time in painful study and obscure researches, to gain a little breath of popularity, and meets with nothing but vexation and disappointment in ninety-nine instances out of a hundred; or when he thinks to grasp the luckless prize, finds it not worth the trouble—the perfume of a minute, fleeting as a shadow, hollow as a sound; "as often got without merit as lost without deserving." He thinks that the attainment of acknowledged excellence will secure him the expression of those feelings in others which the image and hope of it had excited in his own breast; but instead of that, he meets with

nothing (or scarcely nothing) but squint-eyed suspicion, idiot wonder, and grinning scorn. It seems hardly worth while to have taken all the pains he has been at for this!

In youth we borrow patience from our future years: the spring of hope gives us courage to act and suffer. A cloud is upon our onward path, and we fancy that all is sunshine beyond it. The prospect seems endless, because we do not know the end of it. We think that life is long because art is so, and that because we have much to do it is well worth doing: or that no exertions can be too great, no sacrifices too painful, to overcome the difficulties we have to encounter. Life is a continued struggle to be what we are not, and to do what we cannot. But as we approach the goal we draw in the reins; the impulse is less, as we have not so far to go: as we see objects nearer, we become less sanguine in the pursuit: it is not the despair of not attaining, so much as knowing that there is nothing worth obtaining, and the fear of having nothing left even to wish for, that damps our ardour and relaxes our efforts; and if the mechanical habit did not increase the facility, would, I believe, take away all inclination or power to do anything. We stagger on the few remaining paces to the end of our journey; make perhaps one final effort; and are glad when our task is done!

[*Table-Talk, or Original Essays on Men and Manners*, 2 vols., 1821–2. Second Edition, 1824. Third Edition, 1845–6. Fourth Edition, 1873. Many of these Essays originally appeared in the *London Magazine* and other Periodicals.]

THE PAST AND FUTURE.

I HAVE naturally but little imagination, and am not of a very sanguine turn of mind. I have some desire to enjoy the present good, and some fondness for the past; but I am not at all given to building castles in the air, nor to look forward with much confidence or hope to the brilliant illusions held out by the future. Hence I have perhaps been led to form a theory which is very contrary to the common notions and feelings on the subject, and which I will here try to explain as well as I can.

I cannot see, then, any rational or logical ground for that mighty difference in the value which mankind generally set upon the past and future, as if the one was everything and the other nothing—of no consequence whatever. On the other hand, I conceive that the past is as real and substantial a part of our being, that it is as

much a *bonâ fide*, undeniable consideration in the estimate of human life, as the future can possibly be. To say that the past is of no importance, unworthy of a moment's regard, because it has gone by and is no longer anything, is an argument that cannot be held to any purpose; for if the past has ceased to be, and is therefore to be accounted nothing in the scale of good or evil, the future is yet to come, and has never been anything. Should any one choose to assert that the present only is of any value in a strict and positive sense, because that alone has a real existence, that we should seize the instant good and give all else to the winds, I can understand what he means (though perhaps he does not himself); but I cannot comprehend how this distinction between that which has a downright and sensible and that which has only a remote and airy existence can be applied to establish the preference of the future over the past; for both are in this point of view equally ideal, absolutely nothing, except as they are conceived of by the mind's eye, and are thus rendered present to the thoughts and feelings. Nay, the one is even more imaginary, a more fantastic creature of the brain than the other, and the interest we take in it more shadowy and gratuitous; for the future, on which we lay so much stress, may never come to pass at all, that is, may never be embodied into actual existence in the whole course of events, whereas the past has certainly existed once, has received the stamp of truth, and left an image of itself behind. It is so far, then, placed beyond the possibility of doubt, or as the poet has it,

> "Those joys are lodg'd beyond the reach of fate."

It is not, however, attempted to be denied that though the future is nothing at present, and has no immediate interest while we are speaking, yet it is of the utmost consequence in itself, and of the utmost interest to the individual, because it *will have* a real existence, and we have an idea of it as existing in time to come. Well, then, the past also has no real existence; the actual sensation and the interest belonging to it are both fled; but it *has had* a real existence, and we can still call up a vivid recollection of it as having once been; and therefore, by parity of reasoning, it is not a thing perfectly insignificant in itself, nor wholly indifferent to the mind, whether it ever was or not. Oh no! Far from it! Let us not rashly quit our hold upon the past, when perhaps there may be little else left to bind us to existence. Is it nothing to have been, and to have been happy or miserable? Or is it a matter of no moment to think whether I have been one or the other? Do I delude myself, do I build upon a shadow or a dream, do I dress up in the gaudy

garb of idleness and folly a pure fiction, with nothing answering to it in the universe of things and the records of truth, when I look back with fond delight or with tender regret to that which was at one time to me *my all*, when I revive the glowing image of some bright reality,

> "The thoughts of which can never from my heart"?

Do I then muse on nothing, do I bend my eyes on nothing, when I turn back in fancy to "those suns and skies so pure" that lighted up my early path? Is it to think of nothing, to set an idle value upon nothing, to think of all that has happened to me, and of all that can ever interest me? Or, to use the language of a fine poet (who is himself among my earliest and not least painful recollections):

> "What though the radiance which was once so bright
> Be now for ever vanish'd from my sight,
> Though nothing can bring back the hour
> Of glory in the grass, of splendour in the flow'r?"—

yet am I mocked with a lie when I venture to think of it? Or do I not drink in and breathe again the air of heavenly truth when I but "retrace its footsteps, and its skirts far off adore"? I cannot say with the same poet:

> "And see how dark the backward stream,
> A little moment past so smiling"—

for it is the past that gives me most delight and most assurance of reality. What to me constitutes the great charm of the "Confessions of Rousseau" is their turning so much upon this feeling. He seems to gather up the past moments of his being like drops of honey-dew to distil a precious liquor from them; his alternate pleasures and pains are the bead-roll that he tells over and piously worships; he makes a rosary of the flowers of hope and fancy that strewed his earliest years. When he begins the last of the "Reveries of a Solitary Walker," "*Il y a aujourd'hui, jour des Pâques Fleuris, cinquante ans depuis que j'ai premier vu Madame Warens,*" what a yearning of the soul is implied in that short sentence! Was all that had happened to him, all that he had thought and felt in that sad interval of time, to be accounted nothing? Was that long, dim, faded retrospect of years happy or miserable—a blank that was not to make his eyes fail and his heart faint within him in trying to grasp all that had once filled it and that had since vanished, because it was not a prospect into futurity? Was he wrong in finding more to interest him in it than in the next fifty years—

which he did not live to see; or if he had, what then? Would they have been worth thinking of, compared with the times of his youth, of his first meeting with Madame Warens, with those times which he has traced with such truth and pure delight "in our heart's tables"? When "all the life of life was flown," was he not to live the first and best part of it over again, and once more be all that he then was?—Ye woods that crown the clear lone brow of Norman Court, why do I revisit ye so oft, and feel a soothing consciousness of your presence, but that your high tops waving in the wind recall to me the hours and years that are for ever fled; that ye renew in ceaseless murmurs the story of long-cherished hopes and bitter disappointment; that in your solitudes and tangled wilds I can wander and lose myself as I wander on and am lost in the solitude of my own heart; and that as your rustling branches give the loud blast to the waste below—borne on the thoughts of other years, I can look down with patient anguish at the cheerless desolation which I feel within! Without that face pale as the primrose with hyacinthine locks, for ever shunning and for ever haunting me, mocking my waking thoughts as in a dream; without that smile which my heart could never turn to scorn; without those eyes dark with their own lustre, still bent on mine, and drawing the soul into their liquid mazes like a sea of love; without that name trembling in fancy's ear; without that form gliding before me like Oread or Dryad in fabled groves, what should I do? how pass away the listless leaden-footed hours? Then wave, wave on, ye woods of Tuderley, and lift your high tops in the air; my sighs and vows uttered by your mystic voice breathe into me my former being, and enable me to bear the thing I am!—The objects that we have known in better days are the main props that sustain the weight of our affections, and give us strength to await our future lot. The future is like a dead wall or a thick mist hiding all objects from our view; the past is alive and stirring with objects, bright or solemn, and of unfading interest. What is it, in fact, that we recur to oftenest? What subjects do we think or talk of? Not the ignorant future, but the well-stored past. Othello, the Moor of Venice, amused himself and his hearers at the house of Signor Brabantio by "running through the story of his life even from his boyish days," and oft "beguiled them of their tears, when he did speak of some disastrous stroke which his youth suffered." This plan of ingratiating himself would not have answered if the past had been, like the contents of an old almanac, of no use but to be thrown aside and forgotten. What a blank, for instance, does the history of the world for the next six thousand years present to

the mind, compared with that of the last! All that strikes the imagination or excites any interest in the mighty scene is *what has been!*

Neither in itself, then, nor as a subject of general contemplation has the future any advantage over the past. But with respect to our grosser passions and pursuits it has. As far as regards the appeal to the understanding or the imagination, the past is just as good, as real, of as much intrinsic and ostensible value as the future; but there is another principle in the human mind, the principle of action or will; and of this the past has no hold, the future engrosses it entirely to itself. It is this strong lever of the affections that gives so powerful a bias to our sentiments on this subject, and violently transposes the natural order of our associations. We regret the pleasures we have lost, and eagerly anticipate those which are to come: we dwell with satisfaction on the evils from which we have escaped (*Posthæc meminisse iuvabit*), and dread future pain. The good that is past is in this sense like money that is spent, which is of no further use, and about which we give ourselves little concern. The good we expect is like a store yet untouched, and in the enjoyment of which we promise ourselves infinite gratification. What has happened to us we think of no consequence: what is to happen to us, of the greatest. Why so? Simply because the one is still in our power, and the other not, because the efforts of the will to bring any object to pass or to prevent it strengthen our attachment or aversion to that object, because the pains and attention bestowed upon anything add to our interest in it, and because the habitual and earnest pursuit of any end redoubles the ardour of our expectations, and converts the speculative and indolent satisfaction we might otherwise feel in it into real passion. Our regrets, anxiety, and wishes are thrown away upon the past; but the insisting on the importance of the future is of the utmost use in aiding our resolutions and stimulating our exertions. If the future were no more amenable to our wills than the past; if our precautions, our sanguine schemes, our hopes and fears, were of as little avail in the one case as the other; if we could neither soften our minds to pleasure nor steel our fortitude to the resistance of pain beforehand; if all objects drifted along by us like straws or pieces of wood in a river, the will being purely passive, and as little able to avert the future as to arrest the past, we should in that case be equally indifferent to both; that is, we should consider each as they affected the thoughts and imagination with certain sentiments of approbation or regret, but without the importunity of action, the irritation of the will, throwing the whole weight of passion and prejudice into one scale, and

leaving the other quite empty. While the blow is coming we prepare to meet it, we think to ward off or break its force, we arm ourselves with patience to endure what cannot be avoided, we agitate ourselves with fifty needless alarms about it; but when the blow is struck the pang is over, the struggle is no longer necessary, and we cease to harass or torment ourselves about it more than we can help. It is not that the one belongs to the future and the other to time past; but that the one is a subject of action, of uneasy apprehension, of strong passion, and that the other has passed wholly out of the sphere of action into the region of

"Calm contemplation and majestic pains."

It would not give a man more concern to know that he should be put to the rack a year hence than to recollect that he had been put to it a year ago, but that he hopes to avoid the one, whereas he must sit down patiently under the consciousness of the other. In this hope he wears himself out in vain struggles with fate, and puts himself to the rack of his imagination every day he has to live in the meanwhile. When the event is so remote or so independent of the will as to set aside the necessity of immediate action, or to baffle all attempts to defeat it, it gives us little more disturbance or emotion than if it had already taken place, or were something to happen in another state of being, or to an indifferent person. Criminals are observed to grow more anxious as their trial approaches; but after their sentence is passed they become tolerably resigned, and generally sleep sound the night before its execution.

It in some measure confirms this theory, that men attach more or less importance to past and future events according as they are more or less engaged in action and the busy scenes of life. Those who have a fortune to make, or are in pursuit of rank and power, think little of the past, for it does not contribute greatly to their views: those who have nothing to do but to think take nearly the same interest in the past as in the future. The contemplation of the one is as delightful and real as that of the other. The season of hope has an end; but the remembrance of it is left. The past still lives in the memory of those who have leisure to look back upon the way that they have trod, and can from it "catch glimpses that may make them less forlorn." The turbulence of action and uneasiness of desire must point to the future: it is only in the quiet innocence of shepherds, in the simplicity of pastoral ages, that a tomb was found with this inscription, "I ALSO WAS AN ARCADIAN!"

Though I by no means think that our habitual attachment to life is in exact proportion to the value of the gift, yet I am not one

of those splenetic persons who affect to think it of no value at all. *Que peu de chose est la vie humaine!* is an exclamation in the mouths of moralists and philosophers, to which I cannot agree. It is little, it is short, it is not worth having, if we take the last hour, and leave out all that has gone before, which has been one way of looking at the subject. Such calculators seem to say that life is nothing when it is over, and that may, in their sense, be true. If the old rule, *Respice finem*, were to be made absolute, and no one could be pronounced fortunate till the day of his death, there are few among us whose existence would, upon those conditions, be much to be envied. But this is not a fair view of the case. A man's life is his whole life, not the last glimmering snuff of the candle; and this, I say, is considerable, and not *a little matter*, whether we regard its pleasures or its pains. To draw a peevish conclusion to the contrary from our own superannuated desires or forgetful indifference is about as reasonable as to say a man never was young because he has grown old, or never lived because he is now dead. The length or agreeableness of a journey does not depend on the few last steps of it, nor is the size of a building to be judged of from the last stone that is added to it. It is neither the first nor last hour of our existence, but the space that parts these two — not our exit nor our entrance upon the stage, but what we do, feel, and think while there—that we are to attend to in pronouncing sentence upon it. Indeed, it would be easy to show that it is the very extent of human life, the infinite number of things contained in it, its contradictory and fluctuating interests, the transition from one situation to another, the hours, months, years spent in one fond pursuit after another; that it is, in a word, the length of our common journey, and the quantity of events crowded into it, that, baffling the grasp of our actual perception, make it slide from our memory and dwindle into nothing in its own perspective. It is too mighty for us, and we say it is nothing! It is a speck in our fancy, and yet what canvas would be big enough to hold its striking groups, its endless subjects? It is light as vanity, and yet if all its weary moments, if all its head and heart aches were compressed into one, what fortitude would not be overwhelmed with the blow! What a huge heap, a "huge, dumb heap," of wishes, thoughts, feelings, anxious cares, soothing hopes, loves, joys, friendships, it is composed of! How many ideas and trains of sentiment, long and deep and intense, often pass through the mind in only one day's thinking or reading, for instance! How many such days are there in a year, how many years in a long life, still occupied with something interesting, still recalling some old im-

pression, still recurring to some difficult question and making progress in it, every step accompanied with a sense of power, and every moment conscious of "the high endeavour or the glad success;" for the mind seizes only on that which keeps it employed, and is wound up to a certain pitch of pleasurable excitement or lively solicitude, by the necessity of its own nature. . . .

The passions contract and warp the natural progress of life. They paralyse all of it that is not devoted to their tyranny and caprice. This makes the difference between the laughing innocence of childhood, the pleasantness of youth, and the crabbedness of age. A load of cares lies like a weight of guilt upon the mind; so that a man of business often has all the air, the distraction and restlessness and hurry of feeling of a criminal. A knowledge of the world takes away the freedom and simplicity of thought as effectually as the contagion of its example. The artlessness and candour of our early years are open to all impressions alike, because the mind is not clogged and preoccupied with other objects. Our pleasures and our pains come single, make room for one another, and the spring of the mind is fresh and unbroken, its aspect clear and unsullied. Hence "the tear forgot as soon as shed, the sunshine of the breast." But as we advance farther the will gets greater head. We form violent antipathies and indulge exclusive preferences. We make up our minds to some one thing, and if we cannot have that, will have nothing. We are wedded to opinion, to fancy, to prejudice, which destroys the soundness of our judgments and the serenity and buoyancy of our feelings. The chain of habit coils itself round the heart, like a serpent, to gnaw and stifle it. It grows rigid and callous; and for the softness and elasticity of childhood, full of proud-flesh and obstinate tumours. The violence and perversity of our passions come in more and more to overlay our natural sensibility and well-grounded affections; and we screw ourselves up to aim only at those things which are neither desirable nor practicable. Thus life passes away in the feverish irritation of pursuit and the certainty of disappointment. By degrees, nothing but this morbid state of feeling satisfies us; and all common pleasures and cheap amusements are sacrificed to the demon of ambition, avarice, or dissipation. The machine is overwrought: the parching heat of the veins dries up and withers the flowers of Love, Hope, and Joy; and any pause, any release from the rack of ecstasy on which we are stretched, seems more insupportable than the pangs which we endure. We are suspended between tormenting desires and the horrors of *ennui*. The impulse of the will, like the wheels of a carriage going downhill, becomes too strong for the

driver, Reason, and cannot be stopped nor kept within bounds. Some idea, some fancy, takes possession of the brain; and however ridiculous, however distressing, however ruinous, haunts us by a sort of fascination through life.

Not only is this principle of excessive irritability to be seen at work in our more turbulent passions and pursuits, but even in the formal study of arts and sciences the same thing takes place, and undermines the repose and happiness of life. The eagerness of pursuit overcomes the satisfaction to result from the accomplishment. The mind is overstrained to attain its purpose; and when it is attained, the ease and alacrity necessary to enjoy it are gone. The irritation of action does not cease and go down with the occasion for it; but we are first uneasy to get to the end of our work, and then uneasy for want of something to do. The ferment of the brain does not of itself subside into pleasure and soft repose. Hence the disposition to strong stimuli observable in persons of much intellectual exertion to allay and carry off the overexcitement. The *improvisatori* poets (it is recorded by Spence in his "Anecdotes of Pope") cannot sleep after an evening's continued display of their singular and difficult art. The rhymes keep running in their head in spite of themselves, and will not let them rest. Mechanics and labouring people never know what to do with themselves on a Sunday, though they return to their work with greater spirit for the relief, and look forward to it with pleasure all the week. Sir Joshua Reynolds was never comfortable out of his painting-room, and died of chagrin and regret because he could not paint on to the last moment of his life. He used to say that he could go on retouching a picture for ever, as long as it stood on his easel; but as soon as it was once fairly out of the house he never wished to see it again. An ingenious artist of our own time has been heard to declare, that if ever the devil got him into his clutches he would set him to copy his own pictures. Thus the secure, self-complacent retrospect to what is done is nothing, while the anxious, uneasy looking forward to what is to come is everything. We are afraid to dwell upon the past, lest it should retard our future progress; the indulgence of ease is fatal to excellence; and to succeed in life we lose the ends of being.

CAPACITY AND GENIUS.

[From the article "On Genius and Common-Sense."]

Capacity is not the same thing as genius. Capacity may be described to relate to the quantity of knowledge, however acquired,—genius to its quality and the mode of acquiring it. Capacity is power over given ideas or combinations of ideas; genius is the power over those which are not given, and for which no obvious or precise rule can be laid down. Or capacity is power of any sort; genius is power of a different sort from what has yet been shown. A retentive memory, a clear understanding, is capacity, but it is not genius. The Admirable Crichton was a person of prodigious capacity, but there is no proof (that I know) that he had an atom of genius. His verses that remain are dull and sterile. He could learn all that was known of any subject: he could do anything if others could show him the way to do it. This was very wonderful; but that is all you can say of it. It requires a good capacity to play well at chess; but, after all, it is a game of skill, and not of genius. Know what you will of it, the understanding still moves in certain tracks in which others have trod it before, quicker or slower, with more or less comprehension and presence of mind. The greatest skill strikes out nothing for itself, from its own peculiar resources; the nature of the game is a thing determinate and fixed: there is no royal or poetical road to checkmate your adversary. There is no place for genius but in the indefinite and unknown. The discovery of the binomial theorem was an effort of genius; but there was none shown in Jedediah Buxton's being able to multiply nine figures by nine in his head. If he could have multiplied ninety figures by ninety instead of nine, it would have been equally useless toil and trouble. He is a man of capacity who possesses considerable intellectual riches: he is a man of genius who finds out a vein of new ore. Originality is the seeing nature differently from others, and yet as it is in itself. It is not singularity or affectation, but the discovery of new and valuable truth. All the world do not see the whole meaning of any object they have been looking at. Habit blinds them to some things: short-sightedness to others. Every mind is not a gauge and measure of truth. Nature has her surface and her dark recesses. She is deep, obscure, and infinite. It is only minds on whom she makes her fullest impressions that can penetrate her shrine or unveil her *Holy of Holies*. It is only those whom she has filled with her spirit that have the boldness or the power to reveal

her mysteries to others. But nature has a thousand aspects, and one man can only draw out one of them. Whoever does this is a man of genius. One displays her force, another her refinement; one her power of harmony, another her suddenness of contrast; one her beauty of form, another her splendour of colour. Each does that for which he is best fitted by his particular genius; that is to say, by some quality of mind into which the quality of the object sinks deepest where it finds the most cordial welcome, is perceived to its utmost extent, and where again it forces its way out from the fulness with which it has taken possession of the mind of the student. The imagination gives out what it has first absorbed by congeniality of temperament, what it has attracted and moulded into itself by elective affinity, as the loadstone draws and impregnates iron. A little originality is more esteemed and sought for than the greatest acquired talent, because it throws a new light upon things and is peculiar to the individual. The other is common, and may be had for the asking, to any amount.

The value of any work is to be judged of by the quantity of originality contained in it. A very little of this will go a great way. If Goldsmith had never written anything but the two or three first chapters of the "Vicar of Wakefield" or the character of a Village Schoolmaster, they would have stamped him a man of genius. The editors of Encyclopædias are not usually reckoned the first literary characters of the age. The works of which they have the management contain a great deal of knowledge, like chests or warehouses, but the goods are not their own. We should as soon think of admiring the shelves of a library; but the shelves of a library are useful and respectable. I was once applied to, in a delicate emergency, to write an article on a difficult subject for an Encyclopædia, and was advised to take time and give it a systematic and scientific form, to avail myself of all the knowledge that was to be obtained on the subject, and arrange it with clearness and method. I made answer that, as to the first, I had taken time to do all that I ever pretended to do, as I had thought incessantly on different matters for twenty years of my life; that I had no particular knowledge of the subject in question, and no head for arrangement; and that the utmost I could do in such a case would be, when a systematic and scientific article was prepared, to write marginal notes upon it, to insert a remark or illustration of my own (not to be found in former Encylopædias) or to suggest a better definition than had been offered in the text. There are two sorts of writing. The first is compilation, and consists in collecting and stating all that is already known of any question in the best possible manner, for the benefit of the un-

informed reader. An author of this class is a very learned amanuensis of other people's thoughts, The second sort proceeds on an entirely different principle. Instead of bringing down the account of knowledge to the point at which it has already arrived, it professes to start from that point on the strength of the writer's individual reflections; and supposing the reader in possession of what is already known, supplies deficiencies, fills up certain blanks, and quits the beaten road in search of new tracts of observation or sources of feeling. It is in vain to object to this last style that it is disjointed, disproportioned, and irregular. It is merely a set of additions and corrections to other men's works, or to the common stock of human knowledge, printed separately. You might as well expect a continued chain of reasoning in the notes to a book. It skips all the trite, intermediate, level commonplaces of the subject, and only stops at the difficult passages of the human mind, or touches on some striking point that has been overlooked in previous editions. A view of a subject, to be connected and regular, cannot be all new. A writer will always be liable to be charged either with paradox or commonplace, either with dulness or affectation. But we have no right to demand from any one more than he pretends to. There is indeed a medium in all things, but to unite opposite excellences is a task ordinarily too hard for mortality. He who succeeds in what he aims at, or who takes the lead in any one mode or path of excellence, may think himself very well off. It would not be fair to complain of the style of an Encyclopædia as dull, as wanting volatile salt, nor of the style of an Essay because it is too light and sparkling, because it is not a *caput mortuum*. . . . I grant it best to unite solidity with show, general information with particular ingenuity. This is the pattern of a perfect style; but I myself do not pretend to be a perfect writer. In fine, we do not banish light French wines from our tables, or refuse to taste sparkling Champagne when we can get it because it has not the body of old port. Besides, I do not know that dulness is strength, or that an observation is slight because it is striking. Mediocrity, insipidity, want of character, is the great fault.

It is not, then, acuteness of organs or extent of capacity that constitutes rare genius or produces the most exquisite models of art, but an intense sympathy with some one beauty or distinguishing characteristic in nature. Irritability alone, or the interest taken in certain things, may supply the place of genius in weak and otherwise ordinary minds. As there are certain instruments fitted to perform certain kinds of labour, there are certain minds so framed as to produce certain *chef-d'œuvres* in art and literature, which is

surely the best use they can be put to. If a man had all sorts of instruments in his shop and wanted one, he would rather have that one than be supplied with a double set of all the others. If he had them twice over, he could only do what he can do as it is, whereas without that one he perhaps cannot finish any one work he has in hand. So if a man can do one thing better than anybody else, the value of this one thing is what he must stand or fall by, and his being able to do a hundred other things merely as *well* as anybody else would not alter the sentence or add to his respectability; on the contrary, his being able to do so many other things well would probably interfere with and encumber him in the execution of the only thing that others cannot do as well as he, and so far be a drawback and a disadvantage. More people, in fact, fail from a multiplicity of talents and pretensions than from an absolute poverty of resources. . . .

ON PEOPLE WITH ONE IDEA.

THERE are people who have but one idea; at least, if they have more they keep it a secret, for they never talk but of one subject. There is Major Cartwright: he has but one idea or subject of discourse, Parliamentary Reform. Now this a very good thing, a very good idea, and a very good subject to talk about; but why should it be the only one? To hear the worthy and gallant Major resume his favourite topic is like law-business, or a person who has a suit in Chancery going on. Nothing can be attended to, nothing can be talked of, but that. Now it is getting on, now again it is standing still; at one time the Master has promised to pass judgment by a certain day, at another he has put it off again and called for more papers, and both are equally reasons for speaking of it. Like the piece of packthread in the barrister's hands, he turns and twists it all ways, and cannot proceed a step without it. Some schoolboys cannot read but in their own book; and the man of one idea cannot converse out of his own subject. Conversation it is not; but a sort of recital of the preamble of a bill, or a collection of grave arguments for a man's being of opinion with himself. It would be well if there was anything of character, of eccentricity in all this; but that is not the case. It is a political homily personified, a walking commonplace we have to encounter and listen to. It is just as if a man was to insist on your hearing him go through the fifth chapter of the Book of Judges every time you meet, or like the story of the Cosmogony in the "Vicar of Wakefield." It is a tune played on a barrel-organ. It is a common vehicle of discourse into

which they get and are set down when they please, without any pains or trouble to themselves. Neither is it professional pedantry or trading quackery: it has no excuse. The man has no more to do with the question which he saddles on all his hearers than you have. This is what makes the matter hopeless. If a farmer talks to you about his pigs or his poultry, or a physician about his patients, or a lawyer about his briefs, or a merchant about stock, or an author about himself, you know how to account for this; it is a common infirmity; you have a laugh at his expense, and there is no more to be said. But here is a man who goes out of his way to be absurd, and is troublesome by a romantic effort of generosity. You cannot say to him, "All this may be interesting to you, but I have no concern in it:" you cannot put him off in that way. He retorts the Latin adage upon you, *Nihil humani a me alienum puto.* He has got possession of a subject which is of universal and paramount interest (not "a fee-grief, due to some single breast"), and on that plea may hold you by the button as long as he chooses. His delight is to harangue on what nowise regards himself: how, then, can you refuse to listen to what as little amuses you? Time and tide wait for no man. The business of the State admits of no delay. The question of Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments stands first on the order of the day—takes precedence in its own right of every other question. Any other topic, grave or gay, is looked upon in the light of impertinence, and sent *to Coventry.* Business is an interruption; pleasure a digression from it. It is the question before every company where the Major comes, which immediately resolves itself into a committee of the whole world upon it, is carried on by means of a perpetual virtual adjournment, and it is presumed that no other is entertained while this is pending—a determination which gives its persevering advocate a fair prospect of expatiating on it to his dying day. As Cicero says of study, it follows him into the country, it stays with him at home: it sits with him at breakfast, and goes out with him to dinner. It is like a part of his dress, of the costume of his person, without which he would be at a loss what to do. If he meets you in the street, he accosts you with it as a form of salutation: if you see him at his own house, it is supposed you come upon that. If you happen to remark, "It is a fine day, or the town is full," it is considered as a temporary compromise of the question; you are suspected of not going the whole length of the principle. As Sancho, when reprimanded for mentioning his homely favourite in the Duke's kitchen, defended himself by saying, "There I thought of Dapple, and there I spoke of him," so the true stickler for

Reform neglects no opportunity of introducing the subject wherever he is. Place its veteran champion under the frozen north, and he will celebrate sweet smiling Reform: place him under the midday Afric suns, and he will talk of nothing but Reform—Reform so sweetly smiling and so sweetly promising for the last forty years—

"Dulce ridentem Lalagen,
Dulce loquentem!"

A topic of this sort of which the person himself may be considered as almost sole proprietor and patentee is an estate for life, free from all encumbrance of wit, thought, or study; you live upon it as a settled income; and others might as well think to eject you out of a capital freehold house and estate as think to drive you out of it into the wide world of common-sense and argument. Every man's house is his castle, and every man's commonplace is his stronghold, from which he looks out and smiles at the dust and heat of controversy, raised by a number of frivolous and vexatious questions—"Rings the world with the vain stir!" A cure for this and every other evil would be a Parliamentary Reform; and so we return in a perpetual circle to the point from which we set out. Is not this a species of sober madness more provoking than the real? Has not the theoretical enthusiast his mind as much warped, as much enslaved by one idea, as the acknowledged lunatic, only that the former has no lucid intervals? If you see a visionary of this class going along the street, you can tell as well what he is thinking of and will say next as the man that fancies himself a teapot or the Czar of Muscovy. The one is as inaccessible to reason as the other: if the one raves, the other dotes!

There are some who fancy the Corn Bill the root of all evil, and others who trace all the miseries of life to the practice of muffling up children in night-clothes when they sleep or travel. They will declaim by the hour together on the first, and argue themselves black in the face on the last. It is in vain that you give up the point. They persist in the debate, and begin again—"But don't you see—?" These sort of partial obliquities, as they are more entertaining and original, are also by their nature intermittent. They hold a man but for a season. He may have one a year or every two years; and though, while he is in the heat of any new discovery, he will let you hear of nothing else, he varies from himself, and is amusing undesignedly. He is not like the chimes at midnight.

People of the character here spoken of, that is, who tease you to death with some one idea, generally differ in their favourite notion

from the rest of the world; and, indeed, it is the love of distinction which is mostly at the bottom of this peculiarity. Thus one person is remarkable for living on a vegetable diet, and never fails to entertain you all dinner-time with an invective against animal food. One of this self-denying class, who adds to the primitive simplicity of this sort of food the recommendation of having it in a raw state, lamenting the death of a patient whom he had augured to be in a good way as a convert to his system, at last accounted for his disappointment in a whisper—"But she ate meat privately, depend upon it." It is not pleasant, though it is what one submits to willingly from some people, to be asked, every time you meet, whether you have quite left off drinking wine, and to be complimented or condoled with on your looks according as you answer in the negative or affirmative. Abernethy thinks his pill an infallible cure for all disorders. A person once complaining to his physician that he thought his mode of treatment had not answered, he assured him it was the best in the world,—"and as a proof of it," says he, "I have had one gentleman, a patient with your disorder, under the same regimen for the last sixteen years!"—I have known persons whose minds were entirely taken up at all times and on all occasions with such questions as the Abolition of the Slave-trade, the Restoration of the Jews, or the progress of Unitarianism. I myself at one period took a pretty strong turn to inveighing against the Doctrine of Divine Right, and am not yet cured of my prejudice on that subject. How many projectors have gone mad in good earnest from incessantly harping on one idea, the discovery of the philosopher's stone, the finding out the longitude, or paying off the national debt! The disorder at length comes to a fatal crisis; but long before this, and while they were walking about and talking as usual, the derangement of the fancy, the loss of all voluntary power to control or alienate their ideas from the single subject that occupied them, was gradually taking place, and overturning the fabric of the understanding by wrenching it all on one side. Some persons have got a definition of the verb, others a system of shorthand, others a cure for typhus fever, others a method for preventing the counterfeiting of bank-notes, which they think the best possible, and indeed the only one. Others insist there have been only three great men in the world, leaving you to add a fourth. A man who has been in Germany will sometimes talk of no thing but what is German: a Scotchman always leads the discourse to his own country. Some descant on the Kantean philosophy. There is a conceited fellow about town who talks always and everywhere on this subject. He wears the Categories round his neck like a pearl-

chain: he plays off the names of the primary and transcendental qualities like rings on his fingers. He talks of the Kantean system while he dances; he talks of it while he dines, he talks of it to his children, to his apprentices, to his customers. He called on me to convince me of it, and said I was only prevented from becoming a complete convert by one or two prejudices. He knows no more about it than a pikestaff. Why, then, does he make so much ridiculous fuss about it? It is not that he has got this one idea in his head, but that he has got no other. A dunce may talk on the subject of the Kantean philosophy with great impunity: if he opened his lips on any other, he might be found out. A French lady who had married an Englishman who said little, excused him by saying, "He is always thinking of Locke and Newton." This is one way of passing muster by following in the suite of great names! —A friend of mine, whom I met one day in the street, accosted me with more than usual vivacity, and said, "Well, we're selling, we're selling!" I thought he meant a house. "No," he said; "haven't you seen the advertisement in the newspapers? I mean five-and-twenty copies of the Essay." This work, a comely, capacious quarto on the most abstruse metaphysics, had occupied his sole thoughts for several years, and he concluded that I must be thinking of what he was. . . .

Mr. Owen is a man remarkable for one idea. It is that of himself and the Lanark cotton-mills. He carries this idea backwards and forwards with him from Glasgow to London, without allowing anything for attrition, and expects to find it in the same state of purity and perfection in the latter place as at the former. He acquires a wonderful velocity and impenetrability in his undaunted transit. Resistance to him is vain while the whirling motion of the mail-coach remains in his head.

> "Nor Alps nor Apennines can keep him out,
> Nor fortified redoubt."

He even got possession, in the suddenness of his onset, of the steam-engine of the *Times* newspaper, and struck off ten thousand woodcuts of the "Projected Villages," which afforded an ocular demonstration to all who saw them of the practicability of Mr. Owen's whole scheme. He comes into a room with one of these documents in his hand, with the air of a schoolmaster and a quack doctor mixed, asks very kindly how you do, and on hearing you are still in an indifferent state of health owing to bad digestion, instantly turns round and observes, that "all that will be remedied in his plan; that, indeed, he thinks too much attention has been paid to the mind,

and not enough to the body; that in his system, which he has now perfected, and which will shortly be generally adopted, he has provided effectually for both; that he has been long of opinion that the mind depends altogether on the physical organisation, and where the latter is neglected or disordered, the former must languish and want its due vigour; that exercise is therefore a part of his system, with full liberty to develop every faculty of mind and body; that two objections had been made to his 'New View of Society,' viz., its want of relaxation from labour and its want of variety; but the first of these, the too great restraint, he trusted he had already answered, for where the powers of mind and body were freely exercised and brought out, surely liberty must be allowed to exist in the highest degree; and as to the second, the monotony which would be produced by a regular and general plan of co-operation, he conceived he had proved in his 'New View' and 'Addresses to the Higher Classes;' that the co-operation he had recommended was necessarily conducive to the most extensive improvement of the ideas and faculties, and where this was the case, there must be the greatest possible variety instead of a want of it." And having said this, this expert and sweeping orator takes up his hat and walks downstairs after reading his lecture of truisms like a playbill or an apothecary's advertisement; and should you stop him at the door to say, by way of putting in a word in common, that Mr. Southey seems somewhat favourable to his plan in his late Letter to Mr. William Smith, he looks at you with a smile of pity at the futility of all opposition and the idleness of all encouragement. People who thus swell out some vapid scheme of their own into undue importance seem to me to labour under water in the head—to exhibit a huge hydrocephalus! They may be very worthy people for all that, but they are bad companions and very indifferent reasoners. . . .

I hate to be surfeited with anything, however sweet. I do not want to be always tied to the same question, as if there were no other in the world. I like a mind more Catholic.

> "I love to talk with mariners
> That come from a far countreé."

I am not for "a collusion" but "an exchange" of ideas. It is well to hear what other people have to say on a number of subjects. I do not wish to be always respiring the same confined atmosphere, but to vary the scene, and get a little relief and fresh air out of doors. Do all we can to shake it off, there is always enough pedantry, egotism, and self-conceit left lurking behind; we need

not seal ourselves up hermetically in these precious qualities; so as to think of nothing but our own wonderful discoveries, and hear nothing but the sound of our own voice. Scholars, like princes, may learn something by being *incognito*. Yet we see those who cannot go into a bookseller's shop, or bear to be five minutes in a stage-coach, without letting you know who they are. They carry their reputation about with them as the snail does its shell, and sit under its canopy, like the lady in the lobster. I cannot understand this at all. What is the use of a man's always revolving round his own little circle? He must, one should think, be tired of it himself, as well as tire other people. A well-known writer says with much boldness, both in the thought and expression, that "a Lord is imprisoned in the Bastille of a *name*, and cannot enlarge himself into man;" and I have known men of genius in the same predicament. Why must a man be for ever mouthing out his own poetry, comparing himself with Milton, passage by passage, and weighing every line in a balance of posthumous fame which he holds in his own hands? It argues a want of imagination as well as common-sense. Has he no ideas but what he has put into verse, or none in common with his hearers? Why should he think it the only scholar-like thing, the only "virtue extant," to see the merit of his writings, and that "men are brutes without them"? Why should he bear a grudge to all art, to all beauty, to all wisdom that does not spring from his own brain? Or why should he fondly imagine that there is but one fine thing in the world, namely, poetry, and that he is the only poet in it? It will never do. Poetry is a very fine thing; but there are other things besides it. Everything must have its turn. Does a wise man think to enlarge his comprehension by turning his eyes only on himself, or hope to conciliate the admiration of others by scouting, proscribing, and loathing all that they delight in? He must either have a disproportionate idea of himself, or be ignorant of the world in which he lives. It is quite enough to have one class of people born to think the universe made for them!—It seems also to argue a want of repose, of confidence, and firm faith in a man's real pretensions to be always dragging them forward into the foreground, as if the proverb held here, *Out of sight out of mind.* Does he, for instance, conceive that no one would ever think of his poetry unless he forced it upon them by repeating it himself? Does he believe all competition, all allowance of another's merit, fatal to him? Must he, like Moody in the "Country Girl," lock up the faculties of his admirers in ignorance of all other fine things, painting, music, the antique, lest they should play truant to him? Methinks such a proceeding implies no good

opinion of his own genius or their taste:—it is deficient in dignity and in decorum. Surely if any one is convinced of the reality of an acquisition, he can bear not to have it spoken of every minute. If he knows he has an undoubted superiority in any respect, he will not be uneasy because every one he meets is not in the secret, nor staggered by the report of rival excellence.

There are persons who, without being chargeable with the vice here spoken of, yet "stand accountant for as great a sin;" though not dull and monotonous, they are vivacious mannerists in their conversation and excessive egotists. Though they run over a thousand subjects in mere gaiety of heart, their delight still flows from one idea, namely, themselves. Open the book in what page you will, there is a frontispiece of themselves staring you in the face. They are a sort of *Jacks o' the Green*, with a sprig of laurel, a little tinsel, and a little smut, but still playing antics and keeping in incessant motion, to attract attention and extort your pittance of approbation. Whether they talk of the town or the country, poetry or politics, it comes to much the same thing. If they talk to you of the town, its diversions, "its palaces, its ladies, and its streets," they are the delight, the grace, and ornament of it. If they are describing the charms of the country, they give no account of any individual spot or object or source of pleasure but the circumstance of their being there. "With them conversing, we forget all place, all seasons, and their change." They perhaps pluck a leaf or a flower, patronise it, and hand it you to admire, but select no one feature of beauty or grandeur to dispute the palm of perfection with their own persons. Their rural descriptions are mere landscape backgrounds with their own portraits in an engaging attitude in front. They are not observing or enjoying the scene, but doing the honours as masters of the ceremonies to nature, and arbiters of elegance to all humanity. If they tell a love-tale of enamoured princesses, it is plain they fancy themselves the hero of the piece. If they discuss poetry, their encomiums still turn on something genial and unsophisticated, meaning their own style; if they enter into politics, it is understood that a hint from them to the potentates of Europe is sufficient. In short, as a lover (talk of what you will) brings in his mistress at every turn, so these persons contrive to divert your attention to the same darling object—they are, in fact, in love with themselves, and, like lovers, should be left to keep their own company.

THE INDIAN JUGGLERS.

Coming forward and seating himself on the ground in his white dress and tightened turban, the chief of the Indian jugglers begins with tossing up two brass balls, which is what any of us could do, and concludes with keeping up four at the same time, which is what none of us could do to save our lives, nor if we were to take our whole lives to do it in. Is it, then, a trifling power we see at work, or is it not something next to miraculous? It is the utmost stretch of human ingenuity, which nothing but the bending the faculties of body and mind to it from the tenderest infancy with incessant, ever-anxious application up to manhood can accomplish or make even a slight approach to. Man, thou art a wonderful animal, and thy ways past finding out! Thou canst do strange things, but thou turnest them to little account!—To conceive of this effort of extraordinary dexterity distracts the imagination and makes admiration breathless. Yet it costs nothing to the performer, any more than if it were a mere mechanical deception with which he had nothing to do but to watch and laugh at the astonishment of the spectators. A single error of a hair's-breadth, of the smallest conceivable portion of time, would be fatal: the precision of the movements must be like a mathematical truth, their rapidity is like lightning. To catch four balls in succession in less than a second of time, and deliver them back so as to return with seeming consciousness to the hand again; to make them revolve round him at certain intervals, like the planets in their spheres; to make them chase one another like sparkles of fire, or shoot up like flowers or meteors; to throw them behind his back and twine them round his neck like ribbons or like serpents; to do what appears an impossibility, and to do it with all the ease, the grace, the carelessness imaginable; to laugh at, to play with the glittering mockeries; to follow them with his eye as if he could fascinate them with its lambent fire, or as if he had only to see that they kept time with the music on the stage—there is something in all this which he who does not admire may be quite sure he never really admired anything in the whole course of his life. It is skill surmounting difficulty, and beauty triumphing over skill. It seems as if the difficulty once mastered naturally revolved itself into ease and grace, and as if, to be overcome at all, it must be overcome without an effort. The smallest awkwardness or want of pliancy or self-possession would stop the whole process. It is the work of witchcraft, and yet sport

for children. Some of the other feats are quite as curious and wonderful, such as the balancing the artificial tree and shooting a bird from each branch through a quill; though none of them have the elegance or facility of the keeping up of the brass balls. You are in pain for the result, and glad when the experiment is over; they are not accompanied with the same unmixed, unchecked delight as the former; and I would not give much to be merely astonished without being pleased at the same time. As to the swallowing of the sword, the police ought to interfere to prevent it. When I saw the Indian juggler do the same things before, his feet were bare, and he had large rings on the toes, which kept turning round all the time of the performance, as if they moved of themselves. The hearing a speech in Parliament, drawled or stammered out by the Honourable Member or the Noble Lord, the ringing the changes on their commonplaces, which any one could repeat after them as well as they, stirs me not a jot, shakes not my good opinion of myself; but the seeing the Indian jugglers does. It makes me ashamed of myself. I ask what there is that I can do as well as this? Nothing. What have I been doing all my life? Have I been idle, or have I nothing to show for all my labour and pains? Or have I passed my time in pouring words like water into empty sieves, rolling a stone up a hill and then down again, trying to prove an argument in the teeth of facts, and looking for causes in the dark, and not finding them? Is there no one thing in which I can challenge competition, that I can bring as an instance of exact perfection, in which others cannot find a flaw? The utmost I can pretend to is to write a description of what this fellow can do. I can write a book; so can many others who have not even learned to spell. What abortions are these Essays! What errors, what ill-pieced transitions, what crooked reasons, what lame conclusions! How little is made out, and that little how ill! Yet they are the best I can do. I endeavour to recollect all I have ever observed or thought upon a subject, and to express it as nearly as I can. Instead of writing on four subjects at a time, it is as much as I can manage to keep the thread of one discourse clear and unentangled. I have also time on my hands to correct my opinions and polish my periods; but the one I cannot, and the other I will not do. I am fond of arguing; yet with a good deal of pains and practice it is often as much as I can do to beat my man, though he may be an indifferent hand. A common fencer would disarm his adversary in the twinkling of an eye, unless he were a professor like himself. A stroke of wit will sometimes produce this effect, but there is no such power or superiority in sense or reasoning. There is no complete mastery of execution to be

shown there; and you hardly know the professor from the impudent pretender or the mere clown. . . .

Further, what is meant by perfection in mechanical exercises is the performing certain feats to a uniform nicety, that is, in fact, undertaking no more than you can perform. You task yourself; the limit you fix is optional, and no more than human industry and skill can attain to; but you have no abstract, independent standard of difficulty or excellence (other than the extent of your own powers). Thus he who can keep up four brass balls does this *to perfection;* but he cannot keep up five at the same instant, and would fail every time he attempted it. That is, the mechanical performer undertakes to emulate himself, not to equal another. But the artist undertakes to imitate another, or to do what nature has done, and this, it appears, is more difficult, viz., to copy what she has set before us in the face of nature or "human face divine," entire and without a blemish, than to keep up four brass balls at the same instant; for the one is done by the power of human skill and industry, and the other never was nor will be. Upon the whole, therefore, I have more respect for Reynolds than I have for Richer; for, happen how it will, there have been more people in the world who could dance on a rope like the one than who could paint like Sir Joshua. The latter was but a bungler in his profession to the other, it is true; but then he had a harder taskmaster to obey, whose will was more wayward and obscure, and whose instructions it was more difficult to practise. You can put a child apprentice to a tumbler or rope-dancer with a comfortable prospect of success, if they are but sound of wind and limb; but you cannot do the same thing in painting. The odds are a million to one. You may make, indeed, as many Haydons and H——s as you put into that sort of machine, but not one Reynolds amongst them all, with his grace, his grandeur, his blandness of gusto, "in tones and gestures hit," unless you could make the man over again. To snatch this grace beyond the reach of art is, then, the height of art, where fine art begins, and where mechanical skill ends. The soft suffusion of the soul, the speechless breathing eloquence, the looks "commercing with the skies," the ever-shifting forms of an eternal principle, that which is seen but for a moment, but dwells in the heart always, and is only seized as it passes by strong and secret sympathy, must be taught by nature and genius, not by rules or study. It is suggested by feeling, not by laborious microscopic inspection; in seeking for it without, we lose the harmonious clue to it within; and in aiming to grasp the substance, we let the very spirit of art evaporate. In a word, the objects of fine art are not the objects

of sight but as these last are the objects of taste and imagination, that is, as they appeal to the sense of beauty, of pleasure, and of power in the human breast, and are explained by that finer sense, and revealed in their inner structure to the eye in return. Nature is also a language. Objects, like words, have a meaning; and the true artist is the interpreter of this language, which he can only do by knowing its application to a thousand other objects in a thousand other situations. Thus the eye is too blind a guide of itself to distinguish between the warm or cold tone of a deep-blue sky, but another sense acts as a monitor to it, and does not err. The colour of the leaves in autumn would be nothing without the feeling that accompanies it; but it is that feeling that stamps them on the canvas, faded, seared, blighted, shrinking from the winter's flaw, and makes the sight as true as touch

> "And visions, as poetic eyes avow,
> Cling to each leaf and hang on every bough."

The more ethereal, evanescent, more refined and sublime part of art is the seeing nature through the medium of sentiment and passion, as each object is a symbol of the affections and a link in the chain of our endless being. But the unravelling this mysterious web of thought and feeling is alone in the Muse's gift, namely, in the power of that trembling sensibility which is awake to every change and every modification of its ever-varying impressions, that

> "Thrills in each nerve, and lives along the line."

This power is indifferently called genius, imagination, feeling, taste; but the manner in which it acts upon the mind can neither be defined by abstract rules, as is the case in science, nor verified by continual unvarying experiments, as is the case in mechanical performances. The mechanical excellence of the Dutch painters in colouring and handling is that which comes the nearest in fine art to the perfection of certain manual exhibitions of skill. The truth of the effect and the facility with which it is produced are equally admirable. Up to a certain point, everything is faultless. The hand and eye have done their part. There is only a want of taste and genius. It is after we enter upon that enchanted ground that the human mind begins to droop and flag as in a strange road or in a thick mist, benighted and making little way with many attempts and many failures, and that the best of us only escape with half a triumph. The undefined and the imaginary are the regions that we must pass like Satan, difficult and doubtful, "half-flying, half on foot." The object in sense is a positive thing, and execution comes with practice.

Cleverness is a certain *knack* or aptitude at doing certain things which depend more on a particular adroitness and off-hand readiness than on force or perseverance, such as making puns, making epigrams, making extempore verses, mimicking the company, mimicking a style, &c. Cleverness is either liveliness and smartness, or something answering to *sleight-of-hand*, like letting a glass fall sideways off a table, or else a trick, like knowing the secret spring of a watch. Accomplishments are certain external graces, which are to be learned from others, and which are easily displayed to the admiration of the beholder, viz., dancing, riding, fencing, music, and so on. These ornamental acquirements are only proper to those who are at ease in mind and fortune. I know an individual who, if he had been born to an estate of five thousand a year, would have been the most accomplished gentleman of the age. He would have been the delight and envy of the circle in which he moved—would have graced by his manners the liberality flowing from the openness of his heart, would have laughed with the women, have argued with the men, have said good things and written agreeable ones, have taken a hand at piquet or the lead at the harpsichord, and have set and sung his own verses—*nugæ canoræ*—with tenderness and spirit; a Rochester without the vice, a modern Surrey! As it is, all these capabilities of excellence stand in his way. He is too versatile for a professional man, not dull enough for a political drudge, too gay to be happy, too thoughtless to be rich. He wants the enthusiasm of the poet, the severity of the prose-writer, and the application of the man of business.—Talent is the capacity of doing anything that depends on application and industry, such as writing a criticism, making a speech, studying the law. Talent differs from genius, as voluntary differs from involuntary power. Ingenuity is genius in trifles, greatness is genius in undertakings of much pith and moment. A clever or ingenious man is one who can do anything well, whether it is worth doing or not; a great man is one who can do that which when done is of the highest importance. Themistocles said he could not play on the flute, but that he could make of a small city a great one. This gives one a pretty good idea of the distinction in question.

Greatness is great power, producing great effects. It is not enough that a man has great power in himself, he must show it to all the world in a way that cannot be hid or gainsaid. He must fill up a certain idea in the public mind. I have no other notion of greatness than this twofold definition, great results springing from great inherent energy. The great in visible objects has relation to that which extends over space: the great in mental ones has to do

with space and time. No man is truly great who is great only in his life-time. The test of greatness is the page of history. Nothing can be said to be great that has a distinct limit, or that borders on something evidently greater than itself. Besides, what is short-lived and pampered into mere notoriety is of a gross and vulgar quality in itself. A Lord Mayor is hardly a great man. A city orator or patriot of the day only show, by reaching the height of their wishes, the distance they are at from any true ambition. Popularity is neither fame nor greatness. A king (as such) is not a great man. He has great power, but it is not his own. He merely wields the lever of the State, which a child, an idiot, or a madman can do. It is the office, not the man, we gaze at. Any one else in the same situation would be just as much an object of abject curiosity. We laugh at the country girl who, having seen a king, expressed her disappointment by saying, "Why, he is only a man!" Yet, knowing this, we run to see a king as if he was something more than a man. To display the greatest powers, unless they are applied to great purposes, makes nothing for the character of greatness. To throw a barleycorn through the eye of a needle, to multiply nine figures by nine in the memory, argues definite dexterity of body and capacity of mind, but nothing comes of either. There is a surprising power at work, but the effects are not proportionate, or such as take hold of the imagination. To impress the idea of power on others, they must be made in some way to feel it. It must be communicated to their understandings in the shape of an increase of knowledge, or it must subdue and overawe them by subjecting their wills. Admiration to be solid and lasting must be founded on proofs from which we have no means of escaping; it is neither a slight nor a voluntary gift. A mathematician who solves a profound problem, a poet who creates an image of beauty in the mind that was not there before, imparts knowledge and power to others, in which his greatness and his fame consists, and on which it reposes. Jedediah Buxton will be forgotten; but Napier's bones will live. Lawgivers, philosophers, founders of religion, conquerors and heroes, inventors and great geniuses in arts and sciences, are great men, for they are great public benefactors, or formidable scourges to mankind. Among ourselves, Shakspeare, Newton, Bacon, Milton, Cromwell, were great men, for they showed great power by acts and thoughts, which have not yet been consigned to oblivion. They must needs be men of lofty stature whose shadows lengthen out to remote posterity. A great farce-writer may be a great man; for Molière was but a great farce-writer. In my mind, the author of "Don Quixote" was a great man. So have there been

many others. A great chess-player is not a great man, for he leaves the world as he found it. No act terminating in itself constitutes greatness. This will apply to all displays of power or trials of skill, which are confined to the momentary, individual effort, and construct no permanent image or trophy of themselves without them. Is not an actor, then, a great man, because "he dies and leaves the world no copy"? I must make an exception for Mrs. Siddons, or else give up my definition of greatness for her sake. A man at the top of his profession is not therefore a great man. He is great in his way, but that is all, unless he shows the marks of a great moving intellect, so that we trace the master-mind, and can sympathise with the springs that urge him on. The rest is but a craft or *mystery*. John Hunter was a great man—*that* any one might see without the smallest skill in surgery. His style and manner showed the man. He would set about cutting up the carcass of a whale with the same greatness of gusto that Michael Angelo would have hewn a block of marble. Lord Nelson was a great naval commander; but for myself, I have not much opinion of a seafaring life. Sir Humphry Davy is a great chemist, but I am not sure that he is a great man. I am not a bit the wiser for any of his discoveries, nor I never met with any one that was. But it is in the nature of greatness to propagate an idea of itself, as wave impels wave, circle without circle. It is a contradiction in terms for a coxcomb to be a great man. A really great man has always an idea of something greater than himself. I have observed that certain sectaries and polemical writers have no higher compliment to pay their most shining lights than to say that "such a one was a considerable man in his day." Some new elucidation of a text sets aside the authority of the old interpretation, and a "great scholar's memory outlives him half-a-century," at the utmost. A rich man is not a great man, except to his dependents and his steward. A lord is a great man in the idea we have of his ancestry, and probably of himself, if we know nothing of him but his title. I have heard a story of two bishops, one of whom said (speaking of St. Peter's at Rome) that when he first entered it he was rather awe-struck, but that as he walked up it his mind seemed to swell and dilate with it and at last to fill the whole building: the other said, that as he saw more of it he appeared to himself to grow less and less every step he took, and in the end to dwindle into nothing. This was in some respects a striking picture of a great and little mind—for greatness sympathises with greatness, and littleness shrinks into itself. The one might have become a Wolsey; the other was only fit to become a Mendicant Friar—or there might

have been court-reasons for making him a bishop. The French have to me a character of littleness in all about them; but they have produced three great men that belong to every country, Molière, Rabelais, and Montaigne.

JOHN CAVANAGH.

To return from this digression, and conclude the Essay. A singular instance of manual dexterity was shown in the person of the late John Cavanagh, whom I have several times seen. His death was celebrated at the time in an article in the *Examiner* newspaper (February 7, 1819), written apparently between jest and earnest; but as it is pat to our purpose, and falls in with my own way of considering such subjects, I shall here take leave to quote it:—

"Died at his house in Burbage Street, St. Giles's, John Cavanagh, the famous hand fives-player. When a person dies who does any one thing better than any one else in the world, which so many others are trying to do well, it leaves a gap in society. It is not likely that any one will now see the game of fives played in its perfection for many years to come—for Cavanagh is dead, and has not left his peer behind him. It may be said that there are things of more importance than striking a ball against a wall—there are things, indeed, that make more noise and do as little good, such as making war and peace, making speeches and answering them, making verses and blotting them, making money and throwing it away. But the game of fives is what no one despises who has ever played at it. It is the finest exercise for the body, and the best relaxation for the mind. The Roman poet said that 'Care mounted behind the horseman and stuck to his skirts.' But this remark would not have applied to the fives-player. He who takes to playing at fives is twice young. He feels neither the past nor future 'in the instant.' Debts, taxes, 'domestic treason, foreign levy, nothing can touch him further.' He has no other wish, no other thought, from the moment the game begins, but that of striking the ball, of placing it, of *making* it! This Cavanagh was sure to do. Whenever he touched the ball there was an end of the chase. His eye was certain, his hand fatal, his presence of mind complete. He could do what he pleased, and he always knew exactly what to do. He saw the whole game, and played it; took instant advantage of his adversary's weakness, and recovered balls, as if by a miracle and from sudden thought, that every one gave for lost. He had equal power and skill, quickness and judgment. He could either outwit his

antagonist by finesse, or beat him by main strength. Sometimes, when he seemed preparing to send the ball with the full swing of his arm, he would by a slight turn of his wrist drop it within an inch of the line. In general, the ball came from his hand, as if from a racket, in a straight horizontal line; so that it was in vain to attempt to overtake or stop it. As it was said of a great orator that he never was at a loss for a word, and for the properest word, so Cavanagh always could tell the degree of force necessary to be given to a ball, and the precise direction in which it should be sent. He did his work with the greatest ease, never took more pains than was necessary, and while others were fagging themselves to death, was as cool and collected as if he had just entered the court. His style of play was as remarkable as his power of execution. He had no affectation, no trifling. He did not throw away the game to show off an attitude or try an experiment. He was a fine, sensible, manly player, who did what he could, but that was more than any one else could even affect to do. His blows were not undecided and ineffectual—lumbering like Mr. Wordsworth's epic poetry, nor wavering like Mr. Coleridge's lyric prose, nor short of the mark like Mr. Brougham's speeches, nor wide of it like Mr. Canning's wit, nor foul like the *Quarterly*, nor *let* balls like the *Edinburgh Review*. Cobbett and Junius together would have made a Cavanagh. He was the best *uphill* player in the world; even when his adversary was fourteen, he would play on the same or better, and as he never flung away the game through carelessness and conceit, he never gave it up through laziness or want of heart. The one peculiarity of his play was that he never *volleyed*, but let the balls hop; but if they rose an inch from the ground, he never missed having them. There was not only nobody equal, but nobody second to him. It is supposed that he could give any other player half the game, or beat them with his left hand. His service was tremendous. He once played Woodward and Meredith together (two of the best players in England) in the Fives-court, St. Martin's Street, and made seven-and-twenty aces following by services alone—a thing unheard of. He another time played Peru, who was considered a first-rate fives-player, a match of the best out of five games, and in the three first games, which of course decided the match, Peru got only one ace. Cavanagh was an Irishman by birth, and a house-painter by profession. He had once laid aside his working-dress, and walked up, in his smartest clothes, to the Rosemary Branch to have an afternoon's pleasure. A person accosted him, and asked him if he would have a game. So they agreed to play for half-a-crown a game and a bottle of cider. The first game began—it was seven, eight, ten,

thirteen, fourteen, all. Cavanagh won it. The next was the same. They played on, and each game was hardly contested. 'There,' said the unconscious fives-player, 'there was a stroke that Cavanagh could not take: I never played better in my life, and yet I can't win a game. I don't know how it is!' However, they played on, Cavanagh winning every game and the bystanders drinking the cider and laughing all the time. In the twelfth game, when Cavanagh was only four, and the stranger thirteen, a person came in and said, 'What! are you here, Cavanagh?' The words were no sooner pronounced than the astonished player let the ball drop from his hand, and saying, 'What! have I been breaking my heart all this time to beat Cavanagh?' refused to make another effort. 'And yet, I give you my word,' said Cavanagh, telling the story with some triumph, 'I played all the while with my clenched fist.'—He used frequently to play matches at Copenhagen House for wagers and dinners. The wall against which they play is the same that supports the kitchen chimney, and when the wall resounded louder than usual, the cooks exclaimed, 'Those are the Irishman's balls,' and the joints trembled on the spit!—Goldsmith consoled himself that there were places where he too was admired; and Cavanagh was the admiration of all the fives-courts where he ever played. Mr. Powell, when he played matches in the court in St. Martin's Street, used to fill his gallery at half-a-crown a head, with amateurs and admirers of talent in whatever department it is shown. He could not have shown himself in any ground in England but he would have been immediately surrounded with inquisitive gazers, trying to find out in what part of his frame his unrivalled skill lay. He was a young fellow of sense, humour, and courage. He once had a quarrel with a waterman at Hungerford Stairs, and, they say, served him out in great style. In a word, there are hundreds at this day who cannot mention his name without admiration, as the best fives-player that perhaps ever lived (the greatest excellence of which they have any notion); and the noisy shout of the ring happily stood him in stead of the unheard voice of posterity! The only person who seems to have excelled as much in another way as Cavanagh did in his was the late John Davies, the racket-player. It was remarked of him that he did not seem to follow the ball, but the ball seemed to follow him. Give him a foot of wall, and he was sure to make the ball. The four best racket-players of that day were Jack Spines, Jem Harding, Armitage, and Church. Davies could give any one of these two hands a time, that is, half the game, and each of these, at their best, could give the best player now in London the same odds. Such are the gradations in all

exertions of human skill and art. He once played four capital players together, and beat them. He was also a first-rate tennis-player and an excellent fives-player. In the Fleet or King's Bench he would have stood against Powell, who was reckoned the best open-ground player of his time. This last-mentioned player is at present the keeper of the Fives-court, and we might recommend to him for a motto over his door—'Who enters here forgets himself, his country, and his friends.' And the best of it is, that by the calculation of the odds, none of the three are worth remembering!—Cavanagh died from the bursting of a blood-vessel, which prevented him from playing for the last two or three years. This, he was often heard to say, he thought hard upon him. He was fast recovering, however, when he was suddenly carried off, to the regret of all who knew him. As Mr. Peel made it a qualification of the present Speaker, Mr. Manners Sutton, that he was an excellent moral character, so Jack Cavanagh was a zealous Catholic, and could not be persuaded to eat meat on a Friday, the day on which he died. We have paid this willing tribute to his memory.

> 'Let no rude hand deface it,
> And his forlorn "*Hic Jacet.*"'"

ON LIVING TO ONE'S SELF.

> "Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,
> Or by the lazy Scheldt or wandering Po."

I NEVER was in a better place or humour than I am at present for writing on this subject. I have a partridge getting ready for my supper, my fire is blazing on the hearth, the air is mild for the season of the year, I have had but a slight fit of indigestion to-day (the only thing that makes me abhor myself), I have three hours good before me, and therefore I will attempt it. It is as well to do it at once as to have it to do for a week to come.

If the writing on this subject is no easy task, the thing itself is a harder one. It asks a troublesome effort to ensure the admiration of others: it is a still greater one to be satisfied with one's own thoughts. As I look from the window at the wide bare heath before me, and through the misty moonlight air see the woods that wave over the top of Winterslow,

> "While heav'n's chancel-vault is blind with sleet,"

my mind takes its flight through too long a series of years, supported

only by the patience of thought and secret yearnings after truth and good, for me to be at a loss to understand the feeling I intend to write about; but I do not know that this will enable me to convey it more agreeably to the reader. . . .

What I mean by living to one's self is living in the world, as in it, not of it; it is as if no one knew there was such a person, and you wished no one to know it; it is to be a silent spectator of the mighty scene of things, not an object of attention or curiosity in it; to take a thoughtful, anxious interest in what is passing in the world, but not to feel the slightest inclination to make or meddle with it. It is such a life as a pure spirit might be supposed to lead, and such an interest as it might take in the affairs of men, calm, contemplative, passive, distant, touched with pity for their sorrows, smiling at their follies without bitterness, sharing their affections, but not troubled by their passions, not seeking their notice, nor once dreamt of by them. He who lives wisely to himself and to his own heart looks at the busy world through the loopholes of retreat, and does not want to mingle in the fray. "He hears the tumult, and is still." He is not able to mend it, nor willing to mar it. He sees enough in the universe to interest him without putting himself forward to try what he can do to fix the eyes of the universe upon him. Vain the attempt! He reads the clouds, he looks at the stars, he watches the return of the seasons, the falling leaves of autumn, the perfumed breath of spring, starts with delight at the note of a thrush in a copse near him, sits by the fire, listens to the moaning of the wind, pores upon a book, or discourses the freezing hours away, or melts down hours to minutes in pleasing thought. All this while he is taken up with other things, forgetting himself. He relishes an author's style without thinking of turning author. He is fond of looking at a print from an old picture in the room, without teasing himself to copy it. He does not fret himself to death with trying to be what he is not, or to do what he cannot. He hardly knows what he is capable of, and is not in the least concerned whether he shall ever make a figure in the world. He feels the truth of the lines—

> "The man whose eye is ever on himself
> Doth look one, the least of nature's works;
> One who might move the wise man to that scorn
> Which wisdom holds unlawful ever."

He looks out of himself at the wide-extended prospect of nature, and takes an interest beyond his narrow pretensions in general humanity. He is free as air, and independent as the wind. Woe

be to him when he first begins to think what others say of him. While a man is contented with himself and his own resources, all is well. When he undertakes to play a part on the stage, and to persuade the world to think more about him than they do about themselves, he is got into a track where he will find nothing but briars and thorns, vexation and disappointment. I can speak a little to this point. For many years of my life I did nothing but think. I had nothing else to do but solve some knotty point, or dip in some abstruse author, or look at the sky, or wander by the pebbled sea-side:

> "To see the children sporting on the shore,
> And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore."

I cared for nothing, I wanted nothing. I took my time to consider whatever occurred to me, and was in no hurry to give a sophistical answer to a question—there was no printer's devil waiting for me. I used to write a page or two perhaps in half a year, and remember laughing heartily at the celebrated experimentalist, Nicholson, who told me that in twenty years he had written as much as would make three hundred octavo volumes. If I was not a great author, I could read with ever-fresh delight, "never ending, still beginning," and had no occasion to write a criticism when I had done. If I could not paint like Claude, I could admire "the witchery of the soft blue sky" as I walked out, and was satisfied with the pleasure it gave me. If I was dull, it gave me little concern: if I was lively, I indulged my spirits. I wished well to the world, and believed as favourably of it as I could. I was like a stranger in a foreign land, at which I looked with wonder, curiosity, and delight, without expecting to be an object of attention in return. I had no relations to the State, no duty to perform, no ties to bind me to others: I had neither friend nor mistress, wife nor child. I lived in a world of contemplation, and not of action.

This sort of dreaming existence is the best. He who quits it to go in search of realities generally barters repose for repeated disappointments and vain regrets. His time, thoughts, and feelings are no longer at his own disposal. From that instant he does not survey the objects of nature as they are in themselves, but looks asquint at them to see whether he cannot make them the instruments of his ambition, interest, or pleasure; for a candid, undesigning, undisguised simplicity of character, his views become jaundiced, sinister, and double: he takes no further interest in the great changes of the world but as he has a paltry share in producing them: instead of opening his senses, his understanding, and his

heart to the resplendent fabric of the universe, he holds a crooked mirror before his face, in which he may admire his own person and pretensions, and just glance his eye aside to see whether others are not admiring him too. He no more exists in the impression which "the fair variety of things" makes upon him, softened and subdued by habitual contemplation, but in the feverish sense of his own upstart self-importance. By aiming to fix, he is become the slave of opinion. He is a tool, a part of a machine that never stands still, and is sick and giddy with the ceaseless motion. He has no satisfaction but in the reflection of his own image in the public gaze—but in the repetition of his own name in the public ear. He himself is mixed up with and spoils everything. . . .

I have seen a celebrated talker of our own time turn pale and go out of the room when a showy-looking girl has come into it, who for a moment divided the attention of his hearers. Infinite are the mortifications of the bare attempt to emerge from obscurity; numberless the failures; and greater and more galling still the vicissitudes and tormenting accompaniments of success:

> ——"Whose top to climb
> Is certain falling, or so slippery, that
> The fear's as bad as falling."

"Would to God," exclaimed Oliver Cromwell, when he was at any time thwarted by the Parliament, "that I had remained by my woodside to tend a flock of sheep, rather than have been thrust on such a government as this!" When Buonaparte got into his carriage to proceed on his Russian expedition, carelessly twirling his glove and singing the air, "Malbrook to the war is going," he did not think of the tumble he has got since, the shock of which no one could have stood but himself. We see and hear chiefly of the favourites of Fortune and the Muse, of great generals, of first-rate actors, of celebrated poets. These are at the head; we are struck with the glittering eminence on which they stand, and long to set out on the same tempting career,—not thinking how many discontented half-pay lieutenants are in vain seeking promotion all their lives, and obliged to put up with "the insolence of office, and the spurns which patient merit of the unworthy takes;" how many half-starved strolling-players are doomed to penury and tattered robes in country places, dreaming to the last of a London engagement; how many wretched daubers shiver and shake in the ague-fit of alternate hopes and fears, waste and pine away in the atrophy of genius, or else turn drawing-masters, picture-cleaners, or newspaper critics; how many hapless poets have sighed out their souls to the

Muse in vain, without ever getting their effusions further known than the Poet's Corner of a country newspaper, and looked and looked with grudging, wistful eyes at the envious horizon that bounded their provincial fame!—Suppose an actor, for instance, "after the heart-aches and the thousand natural pangs that flesh is heir to," *does* get at the top of his profession, he can no longer bear a rival near the throne; to be second, or only equal to another, is to be nothing: he starts at the prospect of a successor, and retains the mimic sceptre with a convulsive grasp: perhaps, as he is about to seize the first place which he has long had in his eye, an unsuspected competitor steps in before him and carries off the prize, leaving him to commence his irksome toil again. He is in a state of alarm at every appearance or rumour of the appearance of a new actor: "a mouse that takes up its lodgings in a cat's ear" has a mansion of peace to him: he dreads every hint of an objection, and least of all can forgive praise mingled with censure: to doubt is to insult; to discriminate is to degrade: he dare hardly look into a criticism unless some one has *tasted* it for him, to see that there is no offence in it: if he does not draw crowded houses every night, he can neither eat nor sleep; or if all these terrible inflictions are removed, and he can "eat his meal in peace," he then becomes surfeited with applause and dissatisfied with his profession: he wants to be something else, to be distinguished as an author, a collector, a classical scholar, a man of sense and information, and weighs every word he utters, and half-retracts it before he utters it, lest if he were to make the smallest slip of the tongue, it should get buzzed abroad that *Mr. —— was only clever as an actor!* If ever there was a man who did not derive more pain than pleasure from his vanity, that man, says Rousseau, was no other than a fool. . . .

Even in the common affairs of life, in love, friendship, and marriage, how little security have we when we trust our happiness in the hands of others! Most of the friends I have seen have turned out the bitterest enemies or cold, uncomfortable acquaintance. Old companions are like meats served up too often, that lose their relish and their wholesomeness. He who looks at beauty to admire, to adore it, who reads of its wondrous power in novels, in poems, or in plays, is not unwise; but let no man fall in love, for from that moment he is "the baby of a girl." I like very well to repeat such lines as these in the play of "Mirandola:"

> ——"With what a waving air she goes
> Along the corridor! How like a fawn!
> Yet statelier. Hark! No sound, however soft,

Nor gentlest echo telleth when she treads,
But every motion of her shape doth seem
Hallowed by silence."

How few out of the infinite number of those that marry and are given in marriage wed with those they would prefer to all the world! Nay, how far the greater proportion are joined together by mere motives of convenience, accident, recommendation of friends, or indeed not infrequently by the very fear of the event, by repugnance and a sort of fatal fascination! Yet the tie is for life, not to be shaken off but with disgrace or death: a man no longer lives to himself, but is a body (as well as mind) chained to another, in spite of himself:

"Like life and death in disproportion met."

If love at first sight were mutual, or to be conciliated by kind offices; if the fondest affection were not so often repaid and chilled by indifference and scorn; if so many lovers, both before and since the madman in "Don Quixote," had not "worshipped a statue, hunted the wind, cried aloud to the desert;" if friendship were lasting; if merit were renown, and renown were health, riches, and long life; or if the homage of the world were paid to conscious worth and the true aspirations after excellence, instead of its gaudy signs and outward trappings; then, indeed, I might be of opinion that it is better to live to others than one's self; but as the case stands, I incline to the negative side of the question.

"I have not loved the world, nor the world me;
I have not flattered its rank breath, nor bow'd
To its idolatries a patient knee—
Nor coin'd my cheek to smiles—nor cried aloud
In worship of an echo; in the crowd
They could not deem me one of such; I stood
Among them, but not of them; in a shroud
Of thoughts which were not their thoughts, and still could,
Had I not filled my mind which thus itself subdued.

I have not loved the world, nor the world me—
But let us part fair foes; I do believe,
Though I have found them not, that there may be
Words which are things—hopes which will not deceive,
And virtues which are merciful nor weave
Snares for the failing: I would also deem
O'er others' griefs that some sincerely grieve;
That two, or one, are almost what they seem—
That goodness is no name, and happiness no dream."

Sweet verse embalms the spirit of sour misanthropy; but woe

betide the ignoble prose-writer who should thus dare to compare notes with the world, or tax it roundly with imposture.

If I had sufficient provocation to rail at the public, as Ben Jonson did at the audience in the Prologues to his plays, I think I should do it in good set terms, nearly as follows:—There is not a more mean, stupid, dastardly, pitiful, selfish, spiteful, envious, ungrateful animal than the Public. It is the greatest of cowards, for it is afraid of itself. From its unwieldly, overgrown dimensions, it dreads the least opposition to it, and shakes like isinglass at the touch of a finger. It starts at its own shadow, like the man in the Hartz mountains, and trembles at the mention of its own name. It has a lion's mouth, the heart of a hare, with ears erect and sleepless eyes. It stands "listening its fears." It is so in awe of its own opinion, that it never dares to form any, but catches up the first idle rumour, lest it should be behindhand in its judgment, and echoes it till it is deafened with the sound of its own voice. The idea of what the public will think prevents the public from ever thinking at all, and acts as a spell on the exercise of private judgment; so that, in short, the public ear is at the mercy of the first impudent pretender who chooses to fill it with noisy assertions, or false surmises, or secret whispers. What is said by one is heard by all; the supposition that a thing is known to all the world makes all the world believe it, and the hollow repetition of a vague report drowns the "still, small voice" of reason. We may believe or know that what is said is not true; but we know or fancy that others believe it—we dare not contradict or are too indolent to dispute with them, and therefore give up our internal, and, as we think, our solitary conviction to a sound without substance, without proof, and often without meaning. Nay, more; we may believe and know not only that a thing is false, but that others believe and know it to be so, that they are quite as much in the secret of the imposture as we are, that they see the puppets at work, the nature of the machinery, and yet if any one has the art or power to get the management of it, he shall keep possession of the public ear by virtue of a cant phrase or nickname, and by dint of effrontery and perseverance make all the world believe and repeat what all the world know to be false. The ear is quicker than the judgment. We know that certain things are said; by that circumstance alone we know that they produce a certain effect on the imagination of others, and we conform to their prejudices by mechanical sympathy, and for want of sufficient spirit to differ with them. So far, then, is public opinion from resting on a broad and solid basis, as the aggregate of thought and feeling in a community, that it is slight

and shallow and variable to the last degree—the bubble of the moment; so that we may safely say the public is the dupe of public opinion, not its parent. The public is pusillanimous and cowardly, because it is weak. It knows itself to be a great dunce, and that it has no opinions but upon suggestion. Yet it is unwilling to appear in leading-strings, and would have it thought that its decisions are as wise as they are weighty. It is hasty in taking up its favourites, more hasty in laying them aside, lest it should be supposed deficient in sagacity in either case. It is generally divided into two strong parties, each of which will allow neither common-sense nor common honesty to the other side. It reads the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews*, and believes them both—or if there is a doubt, malice turns the scale. Taylor and Hessey told me that they had sold nearly two editions of the "Characters of Shakspeare's Plays" in about three months, but that after the *Quarterly* review of them came out they never sold another copy. The public, enlightened as they are, must have known the meaning of that attack as well as those who made it. It was not ignorance then, but cowardice, that led them to give up their own opinion. A crew of mischievous critics at Edinburgh having affixed the epithet of the *Cockney School* to one or two writers born in the metropolis, all the people in London became afraid of looking into their works, lest they too should be convicted of cockneyism. Oh, brave public! . . .

The public is as envious and ungrateful as it is ignorant, stupid, and pigeon-livered:

"A huge-sized monster of ingratitudes."

It reads, it admires, it extols, only because it is the fashion, not from any love of the subject or the man. It cries you up or runs you down out of mere caprice and levity. If you have pleased it, it is jealous of its own involuntary acknowledgment of merit, and seizes the first opportunity, the first shabby pretext, to pick a quarrel with you and be quits once more. Every petty caviller is erected into a judge, every tale-bearer is implicitly believed. Every little low paltry creature that gaped and wondered only because others did so is glad to find you (as he thinks) on a level with himself. An author is not then, after all, a being of another order. Public admiration is forced, and goes against the grain. Public obloquy is cordial and sincere: every individual feels his own importance in it. They give you up bound hand and foot into the power of your accusers. To attempt to defend yourself is a high crime and misdemeanour, a contempt of court, an extreme piece of

impertinence. Or if you prove every charge unfounded, they never think of retracing their error or making you amends. It would be a compromise of their dignity; they consider themselves as the party injured, and resent your innocence as an imputation on their judgment. The celebrated Bub Doddington, when out of favour at Court, said "he would not *justify* before his sovereign: it was for Majesty to be displeased, and for him to believe himself in the wrong!" The public are not quite so modest. People already begin to talk of the Scotch Novels as overrated. How, then, can common authors be supposed to keep their heads long above water? As a general rule, all those who live by the public starve, and are made a by-word and a standing jest into the bargain. Posterity is no better (not a bit more enlightened or more liberal), except that you are no longer in their power, and that the voice of common fame saves them the trouble of deciding on your claims. The public now are the posterity of Milton and Shakspeare. Our posterity will be the living public of a future generation. When a man is dead they put money in his coffin, erect monuments to his memory, and celebrate the anniversary of his birthday in set speeches. Would they take any notice of him if he were living? No!—I was complaining of this to a Scotchman who had been attending a dinner and a subscription to raise a monument to Burns. He replied he would sooner subscribe twenty pounds to his monument than have given it him while living; so that if the poet were to come to life again, he would treat him just as he was treated in fact. This was an honest Scotchman. What *he* said, the rest would do.

Enough: my soul, turn from them, and let me try to regain the obscurity and quiet that I love, "far from the madding strife," in some sequestered corner of my own, or in some far-distant land! In the latter case, I might carry with me as a consolation the passage in Bolingbroke's "Reflections on Exile" in which he describes in glowing colours the resources which a man may always find within himself, and of which the world cannot deprive him:—

"Believe me, the providence of God has established such an order in the world, that of all which belongs to us, the least valuable parts can alone fall under the will of others. Whatever is best is safest; lies out of the reach of human power; can neither be given nor taken away. Such is this great and beautiful work of nature, the world. Such is the mind of man, which contemplates and admires the world whereof it makes the noblest part. These are inseparably ours, and as long as we remain in one, we shall enjoy the other. Let us march, therefore, intrepidly wherever we are led by the course of human accidents. Wherever they lead us, on what

coast soever we are thrown by them, we shall not find ourselves absolutely strangers. We shall feel the same revolution of seasons, and the same sun and moon will guide the course of our year. The same azure vault, bespangled with stars, will be everywhere spread over our heads. There is no part of the world from whence we may not admire those planets which roll, like ours, in different orbits round the same central sun; from whence we may not discover an object still more stupendous, that army of fixed stars hung up in the immense space of the universe, innumerable suns whose beams enlighten and cherish the unknown world which roll around them; and whilst I am ravished by such contemplations as these, whilst my soul is thus raised up to heaven, it imports me little what ground I tread upon." . . .

ON THOUGHT AND ACTION.

. . . If there is a propensity in the vulgar to admire the achievements of personal prowess or instances of fortunate enterprise too much, it cannot be denied that those who have to weigh out and dispense the meed of fame in books have been too much disposed, by a natural bias, to confine all merit and talent to the productions of the pen, or at least to those works which, being artificial or abstract representations of things, are transmitted to posterity and cried up as models in their kind. This, though unavoidable, is hardly just. Actions pass away and are forgotten, or are only discernible in their effects: conquerors, statesmen, and kings live but by their names stamped on the page of history. Hume says rightly that more people think about Virgil and Homer (and that continually) than ever trouble their heads about Cæsar or Alexander. In fact, poets are a longer-lived race than heroes: they breathe more of the air of immortality. They survive more entire in their thoughts and acts. We have all that Virgil or Homer did, as much as if we had lived at the same time with them: we can hold their works in our hands, or lay them on our pillows, or put them to our lips. Scarcely a trace of what the others did is left upon the earth, so as to be visible to common eyes. The one, the dead authors, are living men, still breathing and moving in their writings; the others, the conquerors of the world, are but the ashes in an urn. The sympathy (so to speak) between thought and thought is more intimate and vital than that between thought and action. Thought is linked to thought as flame kindles into flame: the tribute of admiration to the manes of departed heroism is like burning incense in a marble

monument. Words, ideas, feelings, with the progress of time harden into substances: things, bodies, actions, moulder away or melt into a sound, into thin air!—Yet though the Schoolmen in the Middle Ages disputed more about the texts of Aristotle than the battle of Arbela, perhaps Alexander's generals in his lifetime admired his pupil as much and liked him better. For not only a man's actions are effaced and vanish with him; his virtues and generous qualities die with him also:—his intellect only is immortal and bequeathed unimpaired to posterity. Words are the only things that last for ever. . . .

ON VULGARITY AND AFFECTATION.

Few subjects are more nearly allied than these two—vulgarity and affectation. It may be said of them truly that "thin partitions do their bounds divide." There cannot be a surer proof of a low origin or of an innate meanness of disposition than to be always talking and thinking of being genteel. One must feel a strong tendency to that which one is always trying to avoid; whenever we pretend, on all occasions, a mighty contempt for anything, it is a pretty clear sign that we feel ourselves very nearly on a level with it. Of the two classes of people, I hardly know which is to be regarded with most distaste, the vulgar aping the genteel, or the genteel constantly sneering at and endeavouring to distinguish themselves from the vulgar. These two sets of persons are always thinking of one another; the lower of the higher with envy, the more fortunate of their less happy neighbours with contempt. They are habitually placed in opposition to each other; jostle in their pretensions at every turn; and the same objects and train of thought (only reversed by the relative situation of either party) occupy their whole time and attention. The one are straining every nerve and outraging common-sense, to be thought genteel; the others have no other object or idea in their heads than not to be thought vulgar. This is but poor spite, a very pitiful style of ambition. To be merely not that which one heartily despises is a very humble claim to superiority; to despise what one really is, is still worse.

Gentility is only a more select and artificial kind of vulgarity. It cannot exist but by a sort of borrowed distinction. It plumes itself up and revels in the homely pretensions of the mass of mankind. It judges of the worth of everything by name, fashion, and opinion; and hence, from the conscious absence of real qualities or sincere satisfaction in itself, it builds its supercilious and fantastic

conceit on the wretchedness and wants of others. Violent antipathies are always suspicious, and betray a secret affinity. The difference between the "Great Vulgar and the Small" is mostly in outward circumstances. The coxcomb criticises the dress of the clown, as the pedant cavils at the bad grammar of the illiterate, or the prude is shocked at the backslidings of her frail acquaintance. Those who have the fewest resources in themselves naturally seek the food of their self-love elsewhere. The most ignorant people find most to laugh at in strangers; scandal and satire prevail most in country places; and a propensity to ridicule every the slightest or most palpable deviation from what we happen to approve, ceases with the progress of common-sense and decency. True worth does not exult in the faults and deficiencies of others, as true refinement turns away from grossness and deformity, instead of being tempted to indulge in an unmanly triumph over it. Raphael would not faint away at the daubing of a signpost, nor Homer hold his head the higher for being in the company of a Grub Street bard. Real power, real excellence, does not seek for a foil in inferiority, nor fear contamination from coming in contact with that which is coarse and homely. It reposes on itself, and is equally free from spleen and affectation. But the spirit of gentility is the mere essence of spleen and affectation;—of affected delight in its own *would-be* qualifications, and of ineffable disdain poured out upon the involuntary blunders or accidental disadvantages of those whom it chooses to treat as its inferiors. . . .

Now, the essence of vulgarity, I imagine, consists in taking manners, actions, words, opinions, on trust from others, without examining one's own feelings or weighing the merits of the case. It is coarseness or shallowness of taste arising from want of individual refinement, together with the confidence and presumption inspired by example and numbers. It may be defined to be a prostitution of the mind or body to ape the more or less obvious defects of others, because by so doing we shall secure the suffrages of those we associate with. To affect a gesture, an opinion, a phrase, because it is the rage with a large number of persons, or to hold it in abhorrence because another set of persons very little, if at all, better informed cry it down to distinguish themselves from the former, is in either case equal vulgarity and absurdity.—A thing is not vulgar merely because it is common. 'Tis common to breathe, to see, to feel, to live. Nothing is vulgar that is natural, spontaneous, unavoidable. Grossness is not vulgarity, ignorance is not vulgarity, awkwardness is not vulgarity; but all these become vulgar when they are affected and shown off on the authority of others, or to fall

in with *the fashion* or the company we keep. Caliban is coarse enough, but surely he is not vulgar. We might as well spurn the clod under our feet, and call it vulgar. Cobbett is coarse enough, but he is not vulgar. He does not belong to the herd. Nothing real, nothing original, can be vulgar; but I should think an imitator of Cobbett a vulgar man. . . .

There is a well-dressed and an ill-dressed mob, both which I hate. *Odi profanum vulgus, et arceo.* The vapid affectation of the one to me is even more intolerable than the gross insolence and brutality of the other. If a set of low-lived fellows are noisy, rude, and boisterous to show their disregard of the company, a set of fashionable coxcombs are, to a nauseous degree, finical and effeminate to show their thorough breeding. The one are governed by their feelings, however coarse and misguided, which is something; the others consult only appearances, which are nothing, either as a test of happiness or virtue. Hogarth in his prints has trimmed the balance of pretension between the downright blackguard and the *soi-disant* fine gentleman unanswerably. It does not appear in his moral demonstrations (whatever it may do in the genteel letter-writing of Lord Chesterfield or the chivalrous rhapsodies of Burke) that vice by losing all its grossness loses half its evil. It becomes more contemptible, not less disgusting. What is there in common, for instance, between his beaux and belles, his rakes and his coquets, and the men and women, the true heroic and ideal characters in Raphael? But his people of fashion and quality are just upon a par with the low, the selfish, the *unideal* characters in the contrasted view of human life, and are often the very same characters, only changing places. If the lower ranks are actuated by envy and uncharitableness towards the upper, the latter have scarcely any feelings but of pride, contempt, and aversion to the lower. If the poor would pull down the rich to get at their good things, the rich would tread down the poor as in a wine-press, and squeeze the last shilling out of their pockets and the last drop of blood out of their veins. If the headstrong self-will and unruly turbulence of a common alehouse are shocking, what shall we say to the studied insincerity, the insipid want of common-sense, the callous insensibility of the drawing-room and boudoir? I would rather see the feelings of our common nature (for they are the same at bottom) expressed in the most naked and unqualified way, than see every feeling of our nature suppressed, stifled, hermetically sealed under the smooth, cold, glittering varnish of pretended refinement and conventional politeness. The one may be corrected by being better informed; the other is incorrigible, wilful, heartless depravity. I

cannot describe the contempt and disgust I have felt at the tone of what would be thought good company when I have witnessed the sleek, smiling, glossy, gratuitous assumption of superiority to every feeling of humanity, honesty, or principle, as a part of the etiquette, the mental and moral *costume* of the table, and every profession of toleration or favour for the lower orders, that is, for the great mass of our fellow-creatures, treated as an indecorum and breach of the harmony of well-regulated society. . . .

ON GOING A JOURNEY.

One of the pleasantest things in the world is going a journey; but I like to go by myself. I can enjoy society in a room; but out of doors nature is company enough for me. I am then never less alone than when alone.

"The fields his study, nature was his book."

I cannot see the wit of walking and talking at the same time. When I am in the country, I wish to vegetate like the country. I am not for criticising hedgerows and black cattle. I go out of town in order to forget the town and all that is in it. There are those who for this purpose go to watering-places, and carry the metropolis with them. I like more elbow-room, and fewer encumbrances. I like solitude, when I give myself up to it, for the sake of solitude; nor do I ask for

——"a friend in my retreat,
Whom I may whisper solitude is sweet."

The soul of a journey is liberty, perfect liberty, to think, feel, do, just as one pleases. We go a journey chiefly to be free of all impediments and of all inconveniences; to leave ourselves behind, much more to get rid of others. It is because I want a little breathing-space to muse on indifferent matters, where Contemplation

"May plume her feathers and let grow her wings,
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impair'd,"

that I absent myself from the town for a while, without feeling at a loss the moment I am left by myself. Instead of a friend in a post-chaise or in a Tilbury, to exchange good things with and vary the same stale topics over again, for once let me have a truce with impertinence. Give me the clear blue sky over my head and the green turf beneath my feet, a winding road before me, and a three

hours' march to dinner—and then to thinking! It is hard if I cannot start some game on these lone heaths. I laugh, I run, I leap, I sing for joy. From the point of yonder rolling cloud, I plunge into my past being, and revel there, as the sunburnt Indian plunges headlong into the wave that wafts him to his native shore. Then long-forgotten things, like "sunken wrack and sumless treasuries," burst upon my eager sight, and I begin to feel, think, and be myself again. Instead of an awkward silence, broken by attempts at wit or dull commonplaces, mine is that undisturbed silence of the heart which alone is perfect eloquence. No one likes puns, alliterations, antitheses, argument, and analysis better than I do; but I sometimes had rather be without them. "Leave, oh, leave me to my repose!" I have just now other business in hand, which would seem idle to you, but is with me "very stuff o' the conscience." Is not this wild rose sweet without a comment? Does not this daisy leap to my heart set in its coat of emerald? Yet if I were to explain to you the circumstance that has so endeared it to me, you would only smile. Had I not better, then, keep it to myself, and let it serve me to brood over, from here to yonder craggy point, and from thence onward to the far-distant horizon? I should be but bad company all that way, and therefore prefer being alone. I have heard it said that you may, when the moody fit comes on, walk or ride on by yourself, and indulge your reveries. But this looks like a breach of manners, a neglect of others, and you are thinking all the time that you ought to rejoin your party. "Out upon such half-faced fellowship!" say I. I like to be either entirely to myself or entirely at the disposal of others; to talk or be silent, to walk or sit still, to be sociable or solitary. I was pleased with an observation of Mr. Cobbett's, that "he thought it a bad French custom to drink our wine with our meals, and that an Englishman ought to do only one thing at a time." So I cannot talk and think, or indulge in melancholy musing and lively conversation, by fits and starts. "Let me have a companion of my way," says Sterne, "were it but to remark how the shadows lengthen as the sun declines." It is beautifully said; but, in my opinion, this continual comparing of notes interferes with the involuntary impression of things upon the mind, and hurts the sentiment. If you only hint what you feel in a kind of dumb show, it is insipid: if you have to explain it, it is making a toil of a pleasure. You cannot read the book of nature without being perpetually put to the trouble of translating it for the benefit of others. I am for this synthetical method on a journey in preference to the analytical. I am content to lay in a stock of ideas then, and to examine and anatomise them afterwards. I want

to see my vague notions float like the down of the thistle before the breeze, and not to have them entangled in the briars and thorns of controversy. For once, I like to have it all my own way; and this is impossible unless you are alone, or in such company as I do not covet. I have no objection to twenty miles of measured road, but not for pleasure. If you remark the scent of a bean-field crossing the road, perhaps your fellow-traveller has no smell. If you point to a distant object, perhaps he is short-sighted, and has to take out his glass to look at it. There is a feeling in the air, a tone in the colour of a cloud, which hits your fancy, but the effect of which you are unable to account for. There is then no sympathy, but an uneasy craving after it, and a dissatisfaction which pursues you on the way, and in the end probably produces ill-humour. Now, I never quarrel with myself, and take all my own conclusions for granted till I find it necessary to defend them against objections. It is not merely that you may not be of accord on the objects and circumstances that present themselves before you—these may recall a number of objects, and lead to associations too delicate and refined to be possibly communicated to others. Yet these I love to cherish, and sometimes still fondly clutch them, when I can escape from the throng to do so. To give way to our feelings before company seems extravagance or affectation; and, on the other hand, to have to unravel this mystery of our being at every turn, and to make others take an equal interest in it (otherwise the end is not answered), is a task to which few are competent. We must "give it an understanding, but no tongue." My old friend Coleridge, however, could do both. He could go on in the most delightful explanatory way over hill and dale a summer's day, and convert a landscape into a didactic poem or a Pindaric ode. "He talked far above singing." If I could so clothe my ideas in sounding and flowing words, I might perhaps wish to have some one with me to admire the swelling theme; or I could be more content, were it possible for me still to hear his echoing voice in the woods of All-Foxden. They had "that fine madness in them which our first poets had;" and if they could have been caught by some rare instrument, would have breathed such strains as the following:—

> ——"Here be woods as green
> As any, air likewise as fresh and sweet
> As when smooth Zephyrus plays on the fleet
> Face of the curled streams, with flow'rs as many
> As the young spring gives, and as choice as any;
> Here be all new delights, cool streams and wells,
> Arbours o'ergrown with woodbines, caves and dells;

Choose where thou wilt, whilst I sit by and sing,
Or gather rushes to make many a ring
For thy long fingers; tell thee tales of love,
How the pale Phœbe, hunting in a grove,
First saw the boy Endymion, from whose eyes
She took eternal fire that never dies;
How she convey'd him softly in a sleep,
His temples bound with poppy, to the steep
Head of old Latmos, where she stoops each night,
Gilding the mountain with her brother's light,
To kiss her sweetest." [1]

Had I words and images at command like these, I would attempt to wake the thoughts that lie slumbering on golden ridges in the evening clouds; but at the sight of nature my fancy, poor as it is, droops and closes up its leaves, like flowers at sunset. I can make nothing out on the spot:—I must have time to collect myself.

In general, a good thing spoils out-of-door prospects: it should be reserved for Table-talk. Lamb is for this reason, I take it, the worst company in the world out of doors; because he is the best within. I grant there is one subject on which it is pleasant to talk on a journey, and that is, what one shall have for supper when we get to our inn at night. The open air improves this sort of conversation or friendly altercation, by setting a keener edge on appetite. Every mile of the road heightens the flavour of the viands we expect at the end of it. How fine it is to enter some old town, walled and turreted, just at approach of nightfall, or to come to some straggling village, with the lights streaming through the surrounding gloom; and then after inquiring for the best entertainment that the place affords, to "take one's ease at one's inn!" These eventful moments in our lives' history are too precious, too full of solid, heartfelt happiness, to be frittered and dribbled away in imperfect sympathy. I would have them all to myself, and drain them to the last drop: they will do to talk of or to write about afterwards. What a delicate speculation it is, after drinking whole goblets of tea,

"The cups that cheer, but not inebriate,"

and letting the fumes ascend into the brain, to sit considering what we shall have for supper—eggs and a rasher, a rabbit smothered in onions, or an excellent veal-cutlet! Sancho in such a situation once fixed on cow-heel; and his choice, though he could not help it, is not to be disparaged. Then, in the intervals of pictured scenery and Shandean contemplation, to catch the preparation and the stir in the kitchen (getting ready for the gentleman in the parlour).

[1] Fletcher's "Faithful Shepherdess."

Procul, O procul este profani! These hours are sacred to silence and to musing, to be treasured up in the memory, and to feed the source of smiling thoughts hereafter. I would not waste them in idle talk; or if I must have the integrity of fancy broken in upon, I would rather it were by a stranger than a friend. A stranger takes his hue and character from the time and place; he is a part of the furniture and costume of an inn. If he is a Quaker, or from the West Riding of Yorkshire, so much the better. I do not even try to sympathise with him, and he breaks no squares. How I love to see the camps of the gipsies, and to sigh my soul into that sort of life! If I express this feeling to another, he may qualify and spoil it with some objection. I associate nothing with my travelling companion but present objects and passing events. In his ignorance of me and my affairs, I in a manner forget myself. But a friend reminds one of other things, rips up old grievances, and destroys the abstraction of the scene. He comes in ungraciously between us and our imaginary character. Something is dropped in the course of conversation that gives a hint of your profession and pursuits; or from having some one with you that knows the less sublime portions of your history, it seems that other people do. You are no longer a citizen of the world; but your "unhoused free condition is put into circumspection and confine." The *incognito* of an inn is one of its striking privileges—"lord of one's self, uncumbered with a name." Oh! it is great to shake off the trammels of the world and of public opinion; to lose our importunate, tormenting, everlasting personal identity in the elements of nature, and become the creature of the moment, clear of all ties; to hold to the universe only by a dish of sweetbreads, and to owe nothing but the score of the evening; and no longer seeking for applause and meeting with contempt, to be known by no other title than *the Gentleman in the parlour!* One may take one's choice of all characters in this romantic state of uncertainty as to one's real pretensions, and become indefinitely respectable and negatively right-worshipful. We baffle prejudice and disappoint conjecture; and from being so to others, begin to be objects of curiosity and wonder even to ourselves. We are no more those hackneyed commonplaces that we appear in the world; an inn restores us to the level of nature, and quits scores with society! I have certainly spent some enviable hours at inns,—sometimes when I have been left entirely to myself, and have tried to solve some metaphysical problem, as once at Witham Common, where I found out the proof that likeness is not a case of the association of ideas,—at other times, when there have been pictures in the room, as at St. Neot's (I think it was), where I first met with Gribelin's engrav-

ings of the Cartoons, into which I entered at once, and at a little inn on the borders of Wales, where there happened to be hanging some of Westall's drawings, which I compared triumphantly (for a theory that I had, not for the admired artist) with the figure of a girl who had ferried me over the Severn, standing up in a boat between me and the twilight,—at other times I might mention luxuriating in books, with a peculiar interest in this way, as I remember sitting up half the night to read "Paul and Virginia," which I picked up at an inn at Bridgewater, after being drenched in the rain all day; and at the same place I got through two volumes of Madame D'Arblay's "Camilla." It was on the 10th of April 1798 that I sat down to a volume of the "New Eloise," at the inn at Llangollen, over a bottle of sherry and a cold chicken. The letter I chose was that in which St. Preux describes his feelings as he first caught a glimpse from the heights of the Jura of the Pays de Vaud, which I had brought with me as a *bon bouche* to crown the evening with. It was my birthday, and I had for the first time come from a place in the neighbourhood to visit this delightful spot. The road to Llangollen turns off between Chirk and Wrexham; and on passing a certain point you come all at once upon the valley, which opens like an amphitheatre, broad, barren hills rising in majestic state on either side, with "green upland swells that echo to the bleat of flocks" below, and the river Dee babbling over its stony bed in the midst of them. The valley at this time "glittered green with sunny showers," and a budding ash-tree dipped its tender branches in the chiding stream. How proud, how glad I was to walk along the highroad that overlooks the delicious prospect, repeating the lines which I have just quoted from Mr. Coleridge's poems! But besides the prospect which opened beneath my feet, another also opened to my inward sight, a heavenly vision, on which were written, in letters large as Hope could make them, these four words, LIBERTY, GENIUS, LOVE, VIRTUE, which have since faded into the light of common day, or mock my idle gaze.

"The beautiful is vanished, and returns not."

Still, I would return some time or other to this enchanted spot; but I would return to it alone. What other self could I find to share that influx of thoughts, of regret, and delight, the fragments of which I could hardly conjure up to myself, so much have they been broken and defaced? I could stand on some tall rock, and overlook the precipice of years that separates me from what I then was. I was at that time going shortly to visit the poet whom I have above named. Where is he now? Not only I myself have changed; the

world, which was then new to me, has become old and incorrigible. Yet will I turn to thee in thought, O sylvan Dee, in joy, in youth and gladness, as thou then wert; and thou shalt always be to me the river of Paradise, where I will drink of the waters of life freely!

There is hardly anything that shows the short-sightedness or capriciousness of the imagination more than travelling does. With change of place we change our ideas; nay, our opinions and feelings. We can by an effort, indeed, transport ourselves to old and long-forgotten scenes, and then the picture of the mind revives again; but we forget those that we have just left. It seems that we can think but of one place at a time. The canvas of the fancy is but of a certain extent, and if we paint one set of objects upon it, they immediately efface every other. We cannot enlarge our conceptions; we only shift our point of view. The landscape bares its bosom to the enraptured eye; we take our fill of it, and seem as if we could form no other image of beauty or grandeur. We pass on, and think no more of it: the horizon that shuts it from our sight also blots it from our memory like a dream. In travelling through a wild barren country, I can form no idea of a woody and cultivated one. It appears to me that all the world must be barren, like what I see of it. In the country we forget the town, and in town we despise the country. "Beyond Hyde Park," says Sir Topling Flutter, "all is a desert." All that part of the map that we do not see before us is blank. The world in our conceit of it is not much bigger than a nutshell. It is not one prospect expanded into another, county joined to county, kingdom to kingdom, land to seas, making an image voluminous and vast;—the mind can form no larger idea of space than the eye can take in at a single glance. The rest is a name written in a map, a calculation of arithmetic. For instance, what is the true signification of that immense mass of territory and population known by the name of China to us? An inch of pasteboard on a wooden globe, of no more account than a China orange! Things near us are seen of the size of life: things at a distance are diminished to the size of the understanding. We measure the universe by ourselves, and even comprehend the texture of our own being only piecemeal. In this way, however, we remember an infinity of things and places. The mind is like a mechanical instrument that plays a great variety of tunes, but it must play them in succession. One idea recalls another, but it at the same time excludes all others. In trying to renew old recollections, we cannot as it were unfold the whole web of our existence; we must pick out the single threads. So in coming to a place where we have formerly lived, and with which we have intimate associations, every one must

have found that the feeling grows more vivid the nearer we approach the spot, from the mere anticipation of the actual impression: we remember circumstances, feelings, persons, faces, names that we had not thought of for years; but for the time all the rest of the world is forgotten!—To return to the question I have quitted above:—

I have no objection to go to see ruins, aqueducts, pictures, in company with a friend or a party, but rather the contrary, for the former reason reversed. They are intelligible matters, and will bear talking about. The sentiment here is not tacit, but communicable and overt. Salisbury Plain is barren of criticism, but Stonehenge will bear a discussion antiquarian, picturesque, and philosophical. In setting out on a party of pleasure, the first consideration always is where we shall go to: in taking a solitary ramble, the question is what we shall meet with by the way. "The mind is its own place;" nor are we anxious to arrive at the end of our journey. I can myself do the honours indifferently well to works of art and curiosity. I once took a party to Oxford with no mean *éclat*—showed them that seat of the Muses at a distance,

"With glistering spires and pinnacles adorn'd;"

descanted on the learned air that breathes from the grassy quadrangles and stone walls of halls and colleges; was at home in the Bodleian; and at Blenheim quite superseded the powdered cicerone that attended us, and that pointed in vain with his wand to commonplace beauties in matchless pictures. As another exception to the above reasoning, I should not feel confident in venturing on a journey in a foreign country without a companion. I should want at intervals to hear the sound of my own language. There is an involuntary antipathy in the mind of an Englishman to foreign manners and notions that requires the assistance of social sympathy to carry it off. As the distance from home increases, this relief, which was at first a luxury, becomes a passion and an appetite. A person would almost feel stifled to find himself in the deserts of Arabia without friends and countrymen: there must be allowed to be something in the view of Athens or old Rome that claims the utterance of speech; and I own that the Pyramids are too mighty for any single contemplation. In such situations, so opposite to all one's ordinary train of ideas, one seems a species by one's self, a limb torn off from society, unless one can meet with instant fellowship and support. Yet I did not feel this want or craving very pressing once, when I first set my foot on the laughing shores of France. Calais was peopled with novelty and delight. The confused, busy murmur of the place was like oil and wine

poured into my ears; nor did the mariners' hymn, which was sung from the top of an old crazy vessel in the harbour, as the sun went down, send an alien sound into my soul. I only breathed the air of general humanity. I walked over "the vine-covered hills and gay regions of France," erect and satisfied; for the image of man was not cast down and chained to the foot of arbitrary thrones: I was at no loss for language, for that of all the great schools of painting was open to me. The whole is vanished like a shade. Pictures, heroes, glory, freedom, all are fled; nothing remains but the Bourbons and the French people!—There is undoubtedly a sensation in travelling into foreign parts that is to be had nowhere else; but it is more pleasing at the time than lasting. It is too remote from our habitual associations to be a common topic of discourse or reference, and, like a dream or another state of existence, does not piece into our daily modes of life. It is an animated but a momentary hallucination. It demands an effort to exchange our actual for our ideal identity; and to feel the pulse of our old transports revive very keenly, we must "jump" all our present comforts and connections. Our romantic and itinerant character is not to be domesticated. Dr. Johnson remarked how little foreign travel added to the facilities of conversation in those who had been abroad. In fact, the time we have spent there is both delightful and, in one sense, instructive; but it appears to be cut out of our substantial, downright existence, and never to join kindly on to it. We are not the same, but another, and perhaps more enviable, individual all the time we are out of our own country. We are lost to ourselves as well as our friends. So the poet somewhat quaintly sings:

"Out of my country and myself I go."

Those who wish to forget painful thoughts do well to absent themselves for a while from the ties and objects that recall them: but we can be said only to fulfil our destiny in the place that gave us birth. I should on this account like well enough to spend the whole of my life in travelling abroad, if I could anywhere borrow another life to spend afterwards at home!

ON COFFEE-HOUSE POLITICIANS.

. . . I LIKE very well to sit in a room where there are people talking on subjects I know nothing of, if I am only allowed to sit silent and as a spectator; but I do not much like to join in the

conversation, except with people and on subjects to my taste. Sympathy is necessary to society. To look on a variety of faces, humours, and opinions is sufficient: to mix with others, agreement as well as variety is indispensable. What makes good society? I answer, in one word, real fellowship. Without a similitude of tastes, acquirements, and pursuits (whatever may be the difference of tempers and characters) there can be no intimacy or even casual intercourse worth the having. What makes the most agreeable party? A number of people with a number of ideas in common, "yet so as with a difference;" that is, who can put one or more subjects which they have all studied in the greatest variety of entertaining or useful lights. Or in other words, a succession of good things said with good humour, and addressed to the understandings of those who hear them, make the most desirable conversation. Ladies, lovers, beaux, wits, philosophers, the fashionable or the vulgar, are the fittest company for one another. The discourse at Randal's is the best for boxers; that at Long's for lords and loungers. I prefer Hunt's conversation almost to any other person's, because, with a familiar range of subjects, he colours with a totally new and sparkling light, reflected from his own character. Elia, the grave and witty, says things not to be surpassed in essence; but the manner is more painful and less a relief to my own thoughts. Some one conceived he could not be an excellent companion because he was seen walking down the side of the Thames, *passibus iniquis*, after dining at Richmond. The objection was not valid. I will, however, admit that the said Elia is the worst company in the world in bad company, if it be granted me that in good company he is nearly the best that can be. He is one of those of whom it may be said, *Tell me your company, and I'll tell you your manners.* He is the creature of sympathy, and makes good whatever opinion you seem to entertain of him. He cannot outgo the apprehensions of the circle, and invariably acts up or down to the point of refinement or vulgarity at which they pitch him. He appears to take a pleasure in exaggerating the prejudice of strangers against him; a pride in confirming the prepossessions of friends. In whatever scale of intellect he is placed, he is as lively or as stupid as the rest can be for their lives. If you think him odd and ridiculous, he becomes more and more so every minute, *à la folie*, till he is a wonder gazed [at] by all—set him against a good wit and a ready apprehension, and he brightens more and more—

> ——"Or like a gate of steel
> Fronting the sun, receives and renders back
> Its figure and its heat."

We had a pleasant party one evening at Procter's. A young literary bookseller who was present went away delighted with the elegance of the repast, and spoke in raptures of a servant in green livery and a patent-lamp. I thought myself that the charm of the evening consisted in some talk about Beaumont and Fletcher and the old poets, in which every one took part or interest, and in a consciousness that we could not pay our host a better compliment than in thus alluding to studies in which he excelled, and in praising authors whom he had imitated with feeling and sweetness!—I should think it may also be laid down as a rule on this subject, that to constitute good company a certain proportion of hearers and speakers is requisite. Coleridge makes good company for this reason. He immediately establishes the principle of the division of labour in this respect, wherever he comes. He takes his cue as speaker, and the rest of the party theirs as listeners—a "Circean herd"—without any previous arrangement having been gone through. I will just add that there can be no good society without perfect freedom from affectation and constraint. If the unreserved communication of feeling or opinion leads to offensive familiarity, it is not well; but it is no better where the absence of offensive remarks arises only from formality and an assumed respectfulness of manner.

I do not think there is anything deserving the name of society to be found out of London: and that for the two following reasons. First, there is *neighbourhood* elsewhere, accidental or unavoidable acquaintance: people are thrown together by chance or grow together like trees; but you can pick your society nowhere but in London. The very persons that of all others you would wish to associate with in almost every line of life (or at least of intellectual pursuit) are to be met with there. It is hard if out of a million of people you cannot find half-a-dozen to your liking. Individuals may seem lost and hid in the size of the place; but, in fact, from this very circumstance you are within two or three miles' reach of persons that without it you would be some hundreds apart from. Secondly, London is the only place in which each individual in company is treated according to his value in company, and to that only. In every other part of the kingdom he carries another character about with him, which supersedes the intellectual or social one. It is known in Manchester or Liverpool what every man in the room is worth in land or money; what are his connections and prospects in life; and this gives a character of servility or arrogance, of mercenariness, or impertinence to the whole of provincial intercourse. You laugh not in proportion to a man's wit, but his wealth; you have to consider not what but whom you contradict. You speak by the

pound, and are heard by the rood. In the metropolis there is neither time nor inclination for these remote calculations. Every man depends on the quantity of sense, wit, or good manners he brings into society for the reception he meets with in it. A member of Parliament soon finds his level as a commoner: the merchant and manufacturer cannot bring his goods to market here: the great landed proprietor shrinks from being the lord of acres into a pleasant companion or a dull fellow. When a visitor enters or leaves a room, it is not inquired whether he is rich or poor, whether he lives in a garret or a palace, or comes in his own or a hackney-coach, but whether he has a good expression of countenance, with an unaffected manner, and whether he is a man of understanding or a blockhead. These are the circumstances by which you make a favourable impression on the company, and by which they estimate you in the abstract. In the country, they consider whether you have a vote at the next election or a place in your gift, and measure the capacity of others to instruct or entertain them by the strength of their pockets and their credit with their banker. Personal merit is at a prodigious discount in the provinces. I like the country very well, if I want to enjoy my own company; but London is the only place for equal society, or where a man can say a good thing or express an honest opinion without subjecting himself to being insulted, unless he first lays his purse on the table to back his pretensions to talent or independence of spirit. I speak from experience.

ON FAMILIAR STYLE.

. . . Mr. Lamb is the only imitator of old English style I can read with pleasure; and he is so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of his authors, that the idea of imitation is almost done away. There is an inward unction, a marrowy vein both in the thought and feeling, an intuition, deep and lively, of his subject, that carries off any quaintness or awkwardness arising from an antiquated style and dress. The matter is completely his own, though the manner is assumed. Perhaps his ideas are altogether so marked and individual as to require their point and pungency to be neutralised by the affectation of a singular but traditional form of conveyance. Tricked out in the prevailing costume, they would probably seem more startling and out of the way. The old English authors, Burton, Fuller, Coryat, Sir Thomas Brown, are a kind of mediators between us and the more eccentric and whimsical modern, reconciling us to his peculiarities. I do not, however, know how far this is the case or not till

he condescends to write like one of us. I must confess that what I like best of his papers under the signature of Elia (still, I do not presume, amidst such excellence, to decide what is most excellent) is the account of "Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist," which is also the most free from obsolete allusions and turns of expression:

"A well of native English undefiled."

To those acquainted with his admired prototypes, these Essays of the ingenious and highly-gifted author have the same sort of charm and relish that Erasmus's Colloquies or a fine piece of modern Latin have to the classical scholar. Certainly, I do not know any borrowed pencil that has more power or felicity of execution than the one of which I have here been speaking.

It is as easy to write a gaudy style without ideas as it is to spread a pallet of showy colours or to smear in a flaunting transparency. "What do you read?"—"Words, words, words."—"What is the matter?"—"*Nothing*," it might be answered. The florid style is the reverse of the familiar. The last is employed as an unvarnished medium to convey ideas; the first is resorted to as a spangled veil to conceal the want of them. When there is nothing to be set down but words, it costs little to have them fine. Look through the Dictionary, and cull out a *florilegium*, rival the *tulippomania*. Rouge high enough, and never mind the natural complexion. The vulgar, who are not in the secret, will admire the look of preternatural health and vigour; and the fashionable, who regard only appearances, will be delighted with the imposition. Keep to your sounding generalities, your tinkling phrases, and all will be well. Swell out an unmeaning truism to a perfect tympany of style. A thought, a distinction, is the rock on which all this brittle cargo of verbiage splits at once. Such writers have merely *verbal* imaginations, that retain nothing but words. Or their puny thoughts have dragon-wings, all green and gold. They soar far above the vulgar failing of the *Sermo humi obrepens*—their most ordinary speech is never short of an hyperbole, splendid, imposing, vague, incomprehensible, magniloquent, a cento of sounding commonplaces. If some of us, whose "ambition is more lowly," pry a little too narrowly into nooks and corners to pick up a number of "unconsidered trifles," they never once direct their eyes or lift their hands to seize on any but the most gorgeous, tarnished, threadbare patchwork set of phrases, the left-off finery of poetic extravagance, transmitted down through successive generations of barren pretenders. If they criticise actors and actresses, a huddled phantasmagoria of feathers, spangles, floods of light, and oceans of sound float before

their morbid sense, which they paint in the style of Ancient Pistol. Not a glimpse can you get of the merits or defects of the performers: they are hidden in a profusion of barbarous epithets and wilful rhodomontade. Our hypercritics are not thinking of these little fantoccini beings,

"That strut and fret their hour upon the stage,"

but of tall phantoms of words, abstractions, *genera* and *species*, sweeping clauses, periods that unite the Poles, forced alliterations, astounding antitheses:

"And on their pens *Fustian* sits plumed."

If they describe kings and queens, it is an Eastern pageant. The Coronation at either House is nothing to it. We get at four repeated images—a curtain, a throne, a sceptre, and a footstool. These are with them the wardrobe of a lofty imagination; and they turn their servile strains to servile uses. Do we read a description of pictures? It is not a reflection of tones and hues which "nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on," but piles of precious stones, rubies, pearls, emeralds, Golconda's mines, and all the blazonry of art. Such persons are, in fact, besotted with words, and their brains are turned with the glittering, but empty and sterile phantoms of things. Personifications, capital letters, seas of sunbeams, visions of glory, shining inscriptions, tho figures of a transparency, Britannia with her shield, or Hope leaning on an anchor, make up their stock-in-trade. They may be considered as *hieroglyphical* writers. Images stand out in their minds isolated and important merely in themselves, without any groundwork of feeling—there is no context in their imaginations. Words affect them in the same way, by the mere sound, that is, by their possible, not by their actual, application to the subject in hand. They are fascinated by first appearances, and have no sense of consequences. Nothing more is meant by them than meets the ear: they understand or feel nothing more than meets their eye. The web and texture of the universe, and of the heart of man, is a mystery to them: they have no faculty that strikes a chord in unison with it. They cannot get beyond the daubings of fancy, the varnish of sentiment. Objects are not linked to feelings, words to things, but images revolve in splendid mockery, words represent themselves in their strange rhapsodies. The categories of such a mind are pride and ignorance —pride in outside show, to which they sacrifice everything, and ignorance of the true worth and hidden structure both of words and things. With a sovereign contempt for what is familiar and natural,

they are the slaves of vulgar affectation—of a routine of high-flown phrases. Scorning to imitate realities, they are unable to invent anything, to strike out one original idea. They are not copyists of nature, it is true; but they are the poorest of all plagiarists, the plagiarists of words. All is far-fetched, dear-bought, artificial, oriental, in subject and allusion: all is mechanical, conventional, vapid, formal, pedantic, in style and execution. They startle and confound the understanding of the reader by the remoteness and obscurity of their illustrations: they soothe the ear by the monotony of the same everlasting round of circuitous metaphors. They are the *mock-school* in poetry and prose. They flounder about between fustian in expression and bathos in sentiment. They tantalise the fancy, but never reach the head nor touch the heart. Their Temple of Fame is like a shadowy structure raised by Dulness to Vanity, or like Cowper's description of the Empress of Russia's palace of ice, "as worthless as in show 'twas glittering:"

"It smiled, and it was cold!"

ON EFFEMINACY OF CHARACTER.

. . . But oh thou! who didst lend me speech when I was dumb, to whom I owe it that I have not crept on my belly all the days of my life like the serpent, but sometimes lift my forked crest or tread the empyrean, wake thou out of thy midday slumbers![1] Shake off the heavy honeydew of thy soul, no longer lulled with that Circean cup, drinking thy own thoughts with thy own ears, but start up in thy promised likeness, and shake the pillared rottenness of the world! Leave not thy sounding words in air; write them in marble, and teach the coming age heroic truths! Up, and wake the echoes of Time! Rich in deepest lore, die not the bed-rid churl of knowledge, leaving the survivors unblest! Set, set as thou didst rise in pomp and gladness! Dart like the sunflower one broad, golden flash of light; and ere thou ascendest thy native sky, show us the steps by which thou didst scale the Heaven of philosophy, with Truth and Fancy for thy equal guides, that we may catch thy mantle, rainbow-dipped, and still read thy words dear to Memory, dearer to Fame!

There is another branch of this character, which is the trifling or dilatory character. Such persons are always creating difficulties, and unable or unwilling to remove them. They cannot brush aside a cobweb, and are stopped by an insect's wing. Their character

[1] Coleridge is the person here addressed.

is imbecility, rather than effeminacy. The want of energy and resolution in the persons last described arises from the habitual and inveterate predominance of other feelings and motives; in these it is a mere want of energy and resolution, that is, an inherent natural defect of vigour of nerve and voluntary power. There is a specific levity about such persons, so that you cannot propel them to any object or give them a decided momentum in any direction or pursuit. They turn back, as it were, on the occasion that should project them forward with manly force and vehemence. They shrink from intrepidity of purpose, and are alarmed at the idea of attaining their end too soon. They will not act with steadiness or spirit, either for themselves or you. If you chalk out a line of conduct for them, or commission them to execute a certain task, they are sure to conjure up some insignificant objection or fanciful impediment in the way, and are withheld from striking an effectual blow by mere feebleness of character. They may be officious, good-natured, friendly, generous in disposition, but they are of no use to any one. They will put themselves to twice the trouble you desire, not to carry your point, but to defeat it; and in obviating needless objections, neglect the main business. If they do what you want, it is neither at the time nor in the manner that you wish. This timidity amounts to treachery; for by always anticipating some misfortune or disgrace, they realise their unmeaning apprehensions. The little bears sway in their minds over the great: a small inconvenience outweighs a solid and indispensable advantage; and their strongest bias is uniformly derived from the weakest motive. They hesitate about the best way of beginning a thing till the opportunity for action is lost, and are less anxious about its being done than the precise manner of doing it. They will destroy a passage sooner than let an objectionable word pass, and are much less concerned about the truth or the beauty of an image than about the reception it will meet with from the critics. They alter what they write, not because it is, but because it may possibly be wrong, and in their tremulous solicitude to avoid imaginary blunders, run into real ones. What is curious enough is, that with all this caution and delicacy, they are continually liable to extraordinary oversights. They are, in fact, so full of all sorts of idle apprehensions, that they do not know how to distinguish real from imaginary grounds of apprehension; and they often give some unaccountable offence either from assuming a sudden boldness half in sport, or while they are secretly pluming themselves on their dexterity in avoiding everything exceptionable; and the same distraction of motive and short-sightedness which gets them into scrapes hinders them from seeing their way out of them.

Such persons (often of ingenious and susceptible minds) are constantly at cross-purposes with themselves and others; will neither do things nor let others do them; and whether they succeed or fail, never feel confident or at their ease. They spoil the freshness and originality of their own thoughts by asking contradictory advice; and in befriending others, while they are *about it and about it*, you might have done the thing yourself a dozen times over.

There is nothing more to be esteemed than a manly firmness and decision of character. I like a person who knows his own mind and sticks to it; who sees at once what is to be done in given circumstances and does it. He does not beat about the bush for difficulties or excuses, but goes the shortest and most effectual way to work to attain his own ends or to accomplish a useful object. If he can serve you, he will do so; if he cannot, he will say so without keeping you in needless suspense or laying you under pretended obligations. The applying to him in any laudable undertaking is not like stirring "a dish of skimmed milk." There is stuff in him, and it is of the right, practicable sort. He is not all his life at hawk-and-buzzard whether he shall be a Whig or a Tory, a friend or a foe, a knave or a fool, but thinks that life is short, and that there is no time to play fantastic tricks in it, to tamper with principles or trifle with individual feelings. If he gives you a character, he does not add a damning clause to it: he does not pick holes in you lest others should, or anticipate objections lest he should be thought to be blinded by a childish partiality. His object is to serve you, and not to play the game into your enemies' hands.

> "A generous friendship no cold medium knows,
> Burns with one love, with one resentment glows."

WHY DISTANT OBJECTS PLEASE.

Distant objects please because, in the first place, they imply an idea of space and magnitude, and because, not being obtruded too close upon the eye, we clothe them with the indistinct and airy colours of fancy. In looking at the misty mountain-tops that bound the horizon, the mind is, as it were, conscious of all the conceivable objects and interests that lie between; we imagine all sorts of adventures in the interim; strain our hopes and wishes to reach the air-drawn circle, or to "descry new lands, rivers, and mountains," stretching far beyond it: our feelings, carried out of themselves, lose their grossness and their husk, are rarefied, expanded, melt into softness and brighten into beauty, turning to ethereal mould,

sky-tinctured. We drink the air before us, and borrow a more refined existence from objects that hover on the brink of nothing. Where the landscape fades from the dull sight, we fill the thin, viewless space with shapes of unknown good, and tinge the hazy prospect with hopes and wishes and more charming fears.

> "But thou, oh Hope! with eyes so fair,
> What was thy delighted measure?
> Still it whisper'd promised pleasure,
> And bade the lovely scenes at distance hail!"

Whatever is placed beyond the reach of sense and knowledge, whatever is imperfectly discerned, the fancy pieces out at its leisure; and all but the present moment, but the present spot, passion claims for its own, and brooding over it with wings outspread, stamps it with an image of itself. Passion is lord of infinite space, and distant objects please because they border on its confines and are moulded by its touch. When I was a boy I lived within sight of a range of lofty hills, whose blue tops blending with the setting sun had often tempted my longing eyes and wandering feet. At last I put my project in execution, and on a nearer approach, instead of glimmering air woven into fantastic shapes, found them huge lumpish heaps of discoloured earth. I learnt from this (in part) to leave "Yarrow unvisited," and not idly to disturb a dream of good!

Distance of time has much the same effect as distance of place. It is not surprising that fancy colours the prospect of the future as it thinks good, when it even effaces the forms of memory. Time takes out the sting of pain; our sorrows after a certain period have been so often steeped in a medium of thought and passion, that they "unmould their essence," and all that remains of our original impressions is what we would wish them to have been. Not only the untried steep ascent before us, but the rude, unsightly masses of our past experience presently resume their power of deception over the eye; the golden cloud soon rests upon their heads, and the purple light of fancy clothes their barren sides! Thus we pass on, while both ends of our existence touch upon heaven! There is (so to speak) "a mighty stream of tendency" to good in the human mind, upon which all objects float and are imperceptibly borne along; and though in the voyage of life we meet with strong rebuffs, with rocks and quicksands, yet there is "a tide in the affairs of men," a heaving and a restless aspiration of the soul, by means of which, "with sails and tackle torn," the wreck and scattered fragments of our entire being drift into the port and haven of our desires! In all that relates to the affections we put the will for the deed;—so that the

instant the pressure of unwelcome circumstances is removed the mind recoils from their hold, recovers its elasticity, and reunites itself to that image of good, which is but a reflection and configuration of its own nature. Seen in the distance, in the long perspective of waning years, the meanest incidents, enlarged and enriched by countless recollections, become interesting; the most painful, broken and softened by time, soothe. How any object that unexpectedly brings back to us old scenes and associations startles the mind! What a yearning it creates within us! what a longing to leap the intermediate space! How fondly we cling to and try to revive the impression of all that we then were!

"Such tricks hath strong imagination!"

In truth, we impose upon ourselves, and know not what we wish. It is a cunning artifice, a quaint delusion, by which, in pretending to be what we were at a particular moment of time, we would fain be all that we have since been, and have our lives to come over again. It is not the little, glimmering, almost annihilated speck in the distance that rivets our attention and "hangs upon the beating of our hearts;" it is the interval that separates us from it, and of which it is the trembling boundary, that excites all this coil and mighty pudder in the breast. Into that great gap in our being "come thronging soft desires" and infinite regrets. It is the contrast, the change from what we then were, that arms the half-extinguished recollection with its giant strength and lifts the fabric of the affections from its shadowy base. In contemplating its utmost verge we overlook the map of our existence, and retread, in apprehension, the journey of life. So it is that in early youth we strain our eager sight after the pursuits of manhood, and as we are sliding off the stage, strive to gather up the toys and flowers that pleased our thoughtless childhood.

When I was quite a boy my father used to take me to the Montpelier Tea-gardens at Walworth. Do I go there now? No; the place is deserted, and its borders and its beds o'erturned. Is there, then, nothing that can

——"Bring back the hour
Of glory in the grass, of splendour in the flower?"

Oh yes! I unlock the casket of memory and draw back the warders of the brain, and there this scene of my infant wanderings still lives unfaded, or with fresher dyes. A new sense comes upon me, as in a dream; a richer perfume, brighter colours start out; my eyes dazzle; my heart heaves with its new load of bliss, and I am a child again.

My sensations are all glossy, spruce, voluptuous, and fine: they wear a candied coat, and are in holiday trim. I see the beds of larkspur with purple eyes; tall hollyhocks, red or yellow; the broad sunflowers, caked in gold, with bees buzzing round them; wildernesses of pinks, and hot glowing peonies; poppies run to seed; the sugared lily and faint mignonette, all ranged in order, and as thick as they can grow; the box-tree borders; the gravel-walks, the painted alcove, the confectionery, the clotted cream:—I think I see them now with sparkling looks; or have they vanished while I have been writing this description of them? No matter; they will return again when I least think of them. All that I have observed since, of flowers and plants, and grass-plots, and of suburb delights, seems to me borrowed from "that first garden of my innocence"—to be slips and scions stolen from that bed of memory. In this manner the darlings of our childhood burnish out in the eye of after years, and derive their sweetest perfume from the first heartfelt sigh of pleasure breathed upon them,

> ——"Like the sweet south,
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odour!"

If I have pleasure in a flower-garden, I have in a kitchen-garden too, and for the same reason. If I see a row of cabbage-plants or of peas or beans coming up, I immediately think of those which I used so carefully to water of an evening at Wem, when my day's tasks were done, and of the pain with which I saw them droop and hang down their leaves in the morning's sun. Again, I never see a child's kite in the air but it seems to pull at my heart. It is to me "a thing of life." I feel the twinge at my elbow, the flutter and palpitation, with which I used to let go the string of my own, as it rose in the air and towered among the clouds. My little cargo of hopes and fears ascended with it; and as it made a part of my own consciousness then, it does so still, and appears "like some gay creature of the element," my playmate when life was young, and twin-born with my earliest recollections. I could enlarge on this subject of childish amusements, but Mr. Leigh Hunt has treated it so well, in a paper in the *Indicator* on the productions of the toy-shops of the metropolis, that if I were to insist more on it I should only pass for an imitator of that ingenious and agreeable writer, *and for an indifferent one into the bargain.*

Sounds, smells, and sometimes tastes are remembered longer than visible objects, and serve, perhaps, better for links in the chain of association. The reason seems to be this: they are in their nature

intermittent, and comparatively rare; whereas objects of sight are always before us, and, by their continuous succession, drive one another out. The eye is always open; and between any given impression and its recurrence a second time, fifty thousand other impressions have, in all likelihood, been stamped upon the sense and on the brain. The other senses are not so active or vigilant. They are but seldom called into play. The ear, for example, is oftener courted by silence than noise; and the sounds that break that silence sink deeper and more durably into the mind. I have a more present and lively recollection of certain scents, tastes, and sounds, for this reason, than I have of mere visible images, because they are more original, and less worn by frequent repetition. Where there is nothing interposed between any two impressions, whatever the distance of time that parts them, they naturally seem to touch; and the renewed impression recalls the former one in full force, without distraction or competitor. The taste of barberries which have hung out in the snow during the severity of a North American winter I have in my mouth still, after an interval of thirty years;[1] for I have met with no other taste, in all that time, at all like it. It remains by itself, almost like the impression of a sixth sense. But the colour is mixed up indiscriminately with the colours of many other berries, nor should I be able to distinguish it among them. The smell of a brickkiln carries the evidence of its own identity with it: neither is it to me (from peculiar associations) unpleasant. The colour of brickdust, on the contrary, is more common, and easily confounded with other colours. Raphael did not keep it quite distinct from his flesh-colour. I will not say that we have a more perfect recollection of the human voice than of that complex picture the human face, but I think the sudden hearing of a well-known voice has something in it more affecting and striking than the sudden meeting with the face: perhaps, indeed, this may be because we have a more familiar remembrance of the one than the other, and the voice takes us more by surprise on that account. I am by no means certain (generally speaking) that we have the ideas of the other senses so accurate and well made out as those of visible form: what I chiefly mean is, that the feelings belonging to the sensations of our other organs, when accidentally recalled, are kept more separate and pure. Musical sounds, probably, owe a good deal of their interest and romantic effect to the principle here spoken of. Were they constant they would become indifferent, as we may find with respect to disagreeable noises, which we do not hear after a time. I know no

[1] See "Memoirs of William Hazlitt," 1867, i. 6, 7.—ED.

situation more pitiable than that of a blind fiddler, who has but one sense left (if we except the sense of snuff-taking [1]), and who has that stunned or deafened by his own villainous noises. Shakspeare says:

"How silver-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night!"

It has been observed in explanation of this passage, that it is because in the day-time lovers are occupied with one another's faces, but that at night they can only distinguish the sound of each other's voices. I know not how this may be; but I have, ere now, heard a voice break so upon the silence,

"To angels' 'twas most like,

and charm the moonlight air with its balmy essence, that the budding leaves trembled to its accents. Would I might have heard it once more whisper peace and hope (as erst when it was mingled with the breath of spring), and with its soft pulsations lift winged fancy to heaven! But it has ceased, or turned where I no more shall hear it!—Hence, also, we see what is the charm of the shepherd's pastoral reed; and why we hear him, as it were, piping to his flock, even in a picture. Our ears are fancy stung! I remember once strolling along the margin of a stream, skirted with willows and plashy sedges, in one of those low sheltered valleys on Salisbury Plain where the monks of former ages had planted chapels and built hermits' cells. There was a little parish church near, but tall elms and quivering alders hid it from my sight, when, all of a sudden, I was startled by the sound of the full organ pealing on the ear, accompanied by rustic voices and the willing choir of village maids and children. It rose, indeed, "like an exhalation of rich distilled perfumes." The dew from a thousand pastures was gathered in its softness; the silence of a thousand years spoke in it. It came upon the heart like the calm beauty of death; fancy caught the sound, and faith mounted on it to the skies. It filled the valley like a mist, and still poured out its endless chant, and still it swells upon the ear, and wraps me in a golden trance, drowning the noisy tumult of the world! . . .

ON THE DISADVANTAGES OF INTELLECTUAL SUPERIORITY.

The chief disadvantage of knowing more and seeing farther than others is not to be generally understood. A man is, in consequence

[1] See Wilkie's "Blind Fiddler."

of this, liable to start paradoxes, which immediately transport him beyond the reach of the commonplace reader. A person speaking once in a slighting manner of a very original-minded man, received for answer—"He strides on so far before you that he dwindles in the distance!"

Petrarch complains, that "nature had made him different from other people"—*singular' d'altri genti.* The great happiness of life is, to be neither better nor worse than the general run of those you meet with. If you are beneath them, you are trampled upon; if you are above them, you soon find a mortifying level in their indifference to what you particularly pique yourself upon. What is the use of being moral in a night-cellar or wise in Bedlam? "To be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand." So says Shakspeare; and the commentators have not added that, under these circumstances, a man is more likely to become the butt of slander than the mark of admiration for being so. "How now, thou particular fellow?" is the common answer to all such out-of-the-way pretensions. By not doing [at Rome] as those at Rome do, we cut ourselves off from good-fellowship and society. We speak another language, have notions of our own, and are treated as of a different species. Nothing can be more awkward than to intrude with any such far-fetched ideas among the common herd.

Ignorance of another's meaning is a sufficient cause of fear, and fear produces hatred: hence the suspicion and rancour entertained against all those who set up for greater refinement and wisdom than their neighbours. It is in vain to think of softening down this spirit of hostility by simplicity of manners, or by condescending to persons of low estate. The more you condescend, the more they will presume upon it; they will fear you less, but hate you more, and will be the more determined to take their revenge on you for a superiority as to which they are entirely in the dark, and of which you yourself seem to entertain considerable doubt. All the humility in the world will only pass for weakness and folly. They have no notion of such a thing. They always put their best foot forward, and argue that you would do the same if you had any such wonderful talents as people say. You had better, therefore, play off the great man at once—hector, swagger, talk big, and ride the high horse over them: you may by this means extort outward respect or common civility; but you will get nothing (with low people) by forbearance and good-nature but open insult or silent contempt. Coleridge always talks to people about what they don't understand: I, for one, endeavour to talk to them about what they do under-

stand, and find I only get the more ill-will by it. They conceive I do not think them capable of anything better; that I do not think it worth while, as the vulgar saying is, to *throw a word to a dog.* I once complained of this to Coleridge, thinking it hard I should be sent to Coventry for not making a prodigious display. He said, "As you assume a certain character, you ought to produce your credentials. It is a tax upon people's good-nature to admit superiority of any kind, even where there is the most evident proof of it; but it is too hard a task for the imagination to admit it without any apparent ground at all."

There is not a greater error than to suppose that you avoid the envy, malice, and uncharitableness so common in the world by going among people without pretensions. There are no people who have no pretensions; or the fewer their pretensions, the less they can afford to acknowledge yours without some sort of value received. The more information individuals possess, or the more they have refined upon any subject, the more readily can they conceive and admit the same kind of superiority to themselves that they feel over others. But from the low, dull, level sink of ignorance and vulgarity no idea or love of excellence can arise. You think you are doing mighty well with them; that you are laying aside the buckram of pedantry and pretence, and getting the character of a plain, unassuming, good sort of fellow. It will not do. All the while that you are making these familiar advances, and wanting to be at your ease, they are trying to recover the wind of you. You may forget that you are an author, an artist, or what not—they do not forget that they are nothing, nor bate one jot of their desire to prove you in the same predicament. . . .

Meanwhile, those things in which you may really excel go for nothing, because they cannot judge of them. They speak highly of some book which you do not like, and therefore you make no answer. You recommend them to go and see some picture in which they do not find much to admire. How are you to convince them that you are right? Can you make them perceive that the fault is in them, and not in the picture, unless you could give them your knowledge? They hardly distinguish the difference between a Correggio and a common daub. Does this bring you any nearer to an understanding? The more you know of the difference, the more deeply you feel it, or the more earnestly you wish to convey it, the farther do you find yourself removed to an immeasurable distance from the possibility of making them enter into views and feelings of which they have not even the first rudiments. You cannot make them see with your eyes, and they must judge for themselves.

Intellectual is not like bodily strength. You have no hold of the understanding of others but by their sympathy. Your knowing, in fact, so much more about a subject does not give you a superiority, that is, a power over them, but only renders it the more impossible for you to make the least impression on them. Is it, then, an advantage to you? It may be, as it relates to your own private satisfaction, but it places a greater gulf between you and society. It throws stumbling-blocks in your way at every turn. All that you take most pride and pleasure in is lost upon the vulgar eye. What they are pleased with is a matter of indifference or of distaste to you. . . .

It is recorded in the life of some worthy (whose name I forget) that he was one of those "who loved hospitality and respect:" and I profess to belong to the same classification of mankind. Civility is with me a jewel. I like a little comfortable cheer and careless, indolent chat. I hate to be always wise, or aiming at wisdom. I have enough to do with literary cabals, questions, critics, actors, essay-writing, without taking them out with me for recreation and into all companies. I wish at these times to pass for a good-humoured fellow; and good-will is all I ask in return to make good company. I do not desire to be always posing myself or others with the questions of fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute, &c. I must unbend sometimes. I must occasionally lie fallow. The kind of conversation that I affect most is what sort of a day it is, and whether it is likely to rain or hold up fine for to-morrow. This I consider as enjoying the *otium cum dignitate*, as the end and privilege of a life of study. I would resign myself to this state of easy indifference, but I find I cannot. I must maintain a certain pretension, which is far enough from my wish. I must be put on my defence, I must take up the gauntlet continually, or I find I lose ground. "I am nothing, if not critical." While I am thinking what o'clock it is, or how I came to blunder in quoting a well-known passage, as if I had done it on purpose, others are thinking whether I am not really as dull a fellow as I am sometimes said to be. If a drizzling shower patters against the windows, it puts me in mind of a mild spring rain from which I retired twenty years ago into a little public-house near Wem, in Shropshire, and while I saw the plants and shrubs before the door imbibe the dewy moisture, quaffed a glass of sparkling ale, and walked home in the dusk of evening, brighter to me than noonday suns at present are! Would I indulge this feeling? In vain. They ask me what news there is, and stare if I say I don't know. If a new actress has come out, why must I have seen her? If a new novel has appeared, why must I

have read it? I, at one time, used to go and take a hand at cribbage with a friend, and afterwards discuss a cold sirloin of beef, and throw out a few lackadaisical remarks, in a way to please myself, but it would not do long. I set up little pretension, and therefore the little that I did set up was taken from me. As I said nothing on that subject myself, it was continually thrown in my teeth that I was *an author*. From having me at this disadvantage, my friend wanted to peg on a hole or two in the game, and was displeased if I would not let him. If I won of him, it was hard he should be beat by an author. If he won, it would be strange if he did not understand the game better than I did. If I mentioned my favourite game of rackets, there was a general silence, as if this was my weak point. If I complained of being ill, it was asked why I made myself so. If I said such an actor had played a part well, the answer was, there was a different account in one of the newspapers. If any allusion was made to men of letters, there was a suppressed smile. If I told a humorous story, it was difficult to say whether the laugh was at me or at the narrative. The wife hated me for my ugly face; the servants because I could not always get them tickets for the play, and because they could not tell exactly what an author meant. If a paragraph appeared against anything I had written, I found it was ready there before me, and I was to undergo a regular *roasting*. I submitted to all this till I was tired, and then I gave it up. . . .

ON THE FEAR OF DEATH.

"And our little life is rounded with a sleep."

PERHAPS the best cure for the fear of death is to reflect that life has a beginning as well as an end. There was a time when we were not: this gives us no concern—why, then, should it trouble us that a time will come when we shall cease to be? I have no wish to have been alive a hundred years ago, or in the reign of Queen Anne: why should I regret and lay it so much to heart that I shall not be alive a hundred years hence, in the reign of I cannot tell whom?

When Bickerstaff wrote his Essays, I knew nothing of the subjects of them; nay, much later, and but the other day, as it were, in the beginning of the reign of George III., when Goldsmith, Johnson, Burke, used to meet at the Globe, when Garrick was in his glory, and Reynolds was over head and ears with his portraits, and Sterne brought out the volumes of "Tristram Shandy" year by

year, it was without consulting me: I had not the slightest intimation of what was going on: the debates in the House of Commons on the American war or the firing at Bunker's Hill disturbed not me: yet I thought this no evil—I neither ate, drank, nor was merry, yet I did not complain: I had not then looked out into this breathing world, yet I was well; and the world did quite as well without me as I did without it! Why, then, should I make all this outcry about parting with it, and being no worse off than I was before? There is nothing in the recollection that at a certain time we were not come into the world, that "the gorge rises at"—why should we revolt at the idea that we must one day go out of it? To die is only to be as we were before we were born: yet no one feels any remorse, or regret, or repugnance, in contemplating this last idea. It is rather a relief and disburdening of the mind: it seems to have been holiday-time with us then: we were not called to appear upon the stage of life, to wear robes or tatters, to laugh or cry, be hooted or applauded; we had lain *perdus* all this while, snug, out of harm's way; and had slept out our thousands of centuries without wanting to be waked up; at peace and free from care, in a long nonage, in a sleep deeper and calmer than that of infancy, wrapped in the softest and finest dust. And the worst that we dread is, after a short, fretful, feverish being, after vain hopes and idle fears, to sink to final repose again, and forget the troubled dream of life! . . . Ye armed men, knights templars, that sleep in the stone aisles of that old Temple church, where all is silent above, and where a deeper silence reigns below (not broken by the pealing organ), are ye not contented where ye lie? Or would you come out of your long homes to go to the Holy War? Or do you complain that pain no longer visits you; that sickness has done its worst; that you have paid the last debt to nature; that you hear no more of the thickening phalanx of the foe or your lady's waning love; and that while this ball of earth rolls its eternal round, no sound shall ever pierce through to disturb your lasting repose, fixed as the marble over your tombs, breathless as the grave that holds you! And thou, oh! thou, to whom my heart turns, and will turn while it has feeling left, who didst love in vain, and whose first was thy last sigh, wilt not thou too rest in peace (or wilt thou cry to me complaining from thy clay-cold bed?) when that sad heart is no longer sad, and that sorrow is dead which thou wert only called into the world to feel?

It is certain that there is nothing in the idea of a pre-existent state that excites our longing like the prospect of a posthumous existence. We are satisfied to have begun life when we did; we

have no ambition to have set out on our journey sooner; and feel that we have had quite enough to do to battle our way through since. We cannot say,

> "The wars we well remember of King Nine,
> Of old Assaracus and Inachus divine."

Neither have we any wish: we are contented to read of them in story, and to stand and gaze at the vast sea of time that separates us from them. It was early days then: the world was not *well-aired* enough for us: we have no inclination to have been up and stirring. We do not consider the six thousand years of the world before we were born as so much time lost to us: we are perfectly indifferent about the matter. We do not grieve and lament that we did not happen to be in time to see the grand mask and pageant of human life going on in all that period; though we are mortified at being obliged to quit our stand before the rest of the procession passes.

It may be suggested in explanation of this difference, that we know from various records and traditions what happened in the time of Queen Anne, or even in the reigns of the Assyrian monarchs; but that we have no means of ascertaining what is to happen hereafter but by awaiting the event, and that our eagerness and curiosity are sharpened in proportion as we are in the dark about it. This is not at all the case; for at that rate we should be constantly wishing to make a voyage of discovery to Greenland or to the Moon, neither of which we have, in general, the least desire to do. Neither, in truth, have we any particular solicitude to pry into the secrets of futurity, but as a pretext for prolonging our own existence. It is not so much that we care to be alive a hundred or a thousand years hence, any more than to have been alive a hundred or a thousand years ago: but the thing lies here, that we would all of us wish the present moment to last for ever. We would be as we are, and would have the world remain just as it is, to please us.

> "The present eye catches the present object"—

to have and to hold while it may; and abhors, on any terms, to have it torn from us, and nothing left in its room. It is the pang of parting, the unloosing our grasp, the breaking asunder some strong tie, the leaving some cherished purpose unfulfilled, that creates the repugnance to go, and "makes calamity of so long life," as it often is.

> —— "Oh! thou strong heart!
> There's such a covenant 'twixt the world and thee,
> They're loth to break!"

The love of life, then, is an habitual attachment, not an abstract

principle. Simply *to be* does not "content man's natural desire:" we long to be in a certain time, place, and circumstance. We would much rather be now, "on this bank and shoal of time," than have our choice of any future period, than take a slice of fifty or sixty years out of the Millennium, for instance. This shows that our attachment is not confined either to *being* or to *well-being*, but that we have an inveterate prejudice in favour of our immediate existence, such as it is. The mountaineer will not leave his rock, nor the savage his hut; neither are we willing to give up our present mode of life, with all its advantages and disadvantages, for any other that could be substituted for it. No man would, I think, exchange his existence with any other man, however fortunate. We had as lief *not be*, as *not be ourselves*. There are some persons of that reach of soul that they would like to live two hundred and fifty years hence, to see to what height of empire America will have grown up in that period, or whether the English constitution will last so long. These are points beyond me. But I confess I should like to live to see the downfall of the Bourbons. That is a vital question with me; and I shall like it the better the sooner it happens!

No young man ever thinks he shall die. He may believe that others will, or assent to the doctrine that "all men are mortal" as an abstract proposition, but he is far enough from bringing it home to himself individually. Youth, buoyant activity, and animal spirits hold absolute antipathy with old age as well as with death; nor have we, in the heyday of life, any more than in the thoughtlessness of childhood, the remotest conception how

> "This sensible warm motion can become
> A kneaded clod"—

nor how sanguine, florid health and vigour shall "turn to withered, weak, and grey." Or if in a moment of idle speculation we indulge in this notion of the close of life as a theory, it is amazing at what a distance it seems; what a long, leisurely interval there is between; what a contrast its slow and solemn approach affords to our present gay dreams of existence! We eye the farthest verge of the horizon, and think what a way we shall have to look back upon ere we arrive at our journey's end; and without our in the least suspecting it, the mists are at our feet, and the shadows of age encompass us. The two divisions of our lives have melted into each other; the extreme points close and meet with none of that romantic interval stretching out between them that we had reckoned upon; and for the rich, melancholy, solemn hues of age, "the sear, the yellow leaf," the deepening shadows of an autumnal evening, we only feel a

dank, cold mist, encircling all objects, after the spirit of youth is fled. There is no inducement to look forward; and what is worse, little interest in looking back to what has become so trite and common. The pleasures of our existence have worn themselves out, are "gone into the wastes of time," or have turned their indifferent side to us: the pains by their repeated blows have worn us out, and have left us neither spirit nor inclination to encounter them again in retrospect. We do not want to rip up old grievances, nor to renew our youth like the phœnix, nor to live our lives twice over. Once is enough. As the tree falls, so let it lie. Shut up the book and close the account once for all!

It has been thought by some that life is like the exploring of a passage that grows narrower and darker the farther we advance, without a possibility of ever turning back, and where we are stifled for want of breath at last. For myself, I do not complain of the greater thickness of the atmosphere as I approach the narrow house. I felt it more, formerly, when the idea alone seemed to suppress a thousand rising hopes and weighed upon the pulses of the blood. At present I rather feel a thinness and want of support, I stretch out my hand to some object and find none, I am too much in a world of abstraction; the naked map of life is spread out before me, and in the emptiness and desolation I see Death coming to meet me. In my youth I could not behold him for the crowd of objects and feelings, and Hope stood always between us, saying, "Never mind that old fellow!" If I had lived indeed, I should not care to die. But I do not like a contract of pleasure broken off unfulfilled, a marriage with joy unconsummated, a promise of happiness rescinded. My public and private hopes have been left a ruin, or remain only to mock me. I would wish them to be re-edified. I should like to see some prospect of good to mankind, such as my life began with. I should like to leave some sterling work behind me. I should like to have some friendly hand to consign me to the grave. On these conditions I am ready, if not willing, to depart. I shall then write on my tomb—GRATEFUL AND CONTENTED! But I have thought and suffered too much to be willing to have thought and suffered in vain.—In looking back, it sometimes appears to me as if I had in a manner slept out my life in a dream or shadow on the side of the hill of knowledge, where I have fed on books, on thoughts, on pictures, and only heard in half-murmurs the trampling of busy feet or the noises of the throng below. Waked out of this dim, twilight existence, and startled with the passing scene, I have felt a wish to descend to the world of realities and join in the chase. But I fear too late, and

that I had better return to my bookish chimeras and indolence once more! *Zanetto, lascia le donne, et studia la matematica.* I will think of it.

It is not wonderful that the contemplation and fear of death become more familiar to us as we approach nearer to it; that life seems to ebb with the decay of blood and youthful spirits; and that as we find everything about us subject to chance and change, as our strength and beauty die, as our hopes and passions, our friends and our affections, leave us, we begin by degrees to feel ourselves mortal!

I have never seen death but once, and that was in an infant. It is years ago. The look was calm and placid, and the face was fair and firm. It was as if a waxen image had been laid out in the coffin, and strewed with innocent flowers. It was not like death, but more like an image of life! No breath moved the lips, no pulse stirred, no sight or sound would enter those eyes or ears more. While I looked at it, I saw no pain was there; it seemed to smile at the short pang of life which was over; but I could not bear the coffin-lid to be closed—it seemed to stifle me; and still as the nettles wave in a corner of the churchyard over his little grave, the welcome breeze helps to refresh me and ease the tightness at my breast.

[I did not see my father after he was dead, but I saw Death shake him by the palsied hand and stare him in the face. He made as good an end as Falstaff; though different, as became him. After repeating the name of his R(edeemer) often, he took my mother's hand, and, looking up, put it in my sister's, and so expired. There was something graceful and gracious in his nature, which showed itself in his last act.]

An ivory or marble image, like Chantry's monument of the two children, is contemplated with pure delight. Why do we not grieve and fret that the marble is not alive, or fancy that it has a shortness of breath? It never was alive; and it is the difficulty of making the transition from life to death, the struggle between the two in our imagination, that confounds their properties painfully together, and makes us conceive that the infant that is but just dead still wants to breathe, to enjoy, and look about it, and is prevented by the icy hand of death locking up its faculties and benumbing its senses; so that, if it could, it would complain of its own hard state. Perhaps religious considerations reconcile the mind to this change sooner than any others, by representing the spirit as fled to another sphere, and leaving the body behind it. So in reflecting on death generally, we mix up the idea of life with it, and thus make it the

ghastly monster it is. We think how we should feel, not how the dead feel.

"Still from the tomb the voice of nature cries;
Even in our ashes live their wonted fires!"

There is an admirable passage on this subject in Tucker's "Light of Nature Pursued," which I shall transcribe, as by much the best illustration I can offer of it:—

"The melancholy appearance of a lifeless body, the mansion provided for it to inhabit, dark, cold, close, and solitary, are shocking to the imagination; but it is to the imagination only, not the understanding; for whoever consults this faculty will see at first glance that there is nothing dismal in all these circumstances; if the corpse were kept wrapped up in a warm bed, with a roasting fire in the chamber, it would feel no comfortable warmth therefrom; were store of tapers lighted up as soon as day shuts in, it would see no objects to divert it; were it left at large it would have no liberty, nor if surrounded with company would be cheered thereby; neither are the distorted features expressions of pain, uneasiness, or distress. This every one knows, and will readily allow upon being suggested, yet still cannot behold, nor even cast a thought upon those objects without shuddering; for knowing that a living person must suffer grievously under such appearances, they become habitually formidable to the mind, and strike a mechanical horror, which is increased by the customs of the world around us."

There is usually one pang added voluntarily and unnecessarily to the fear of death, by our affecting to compassionate the loss which others will have in us. If that were all, we might reasonably set our minds at rest. The pathetic exhortation on country tombstones, "Grieve not for me, my wife and children dear," &c., is for the most part speedily followed to the letter. We do not leave so great a void in society as we are inclined to imagine, partly to magnify our own importance, and partly to console ourselves by sympathy. Even in the same family the gap is not so great; the wound closes up sooner than we should expect. Nay, *our room* is not infrequently thought better than *our company*. People walk along the streets the day after our deaths just as they did before, and the crowd is not diminished. While we were living, the world seemed in a manner to exist only for us, for our delight and amusement, because it contributed to them. But our hearts cease to beat, and it goes on as usual, and thinks no more about us than it did in our lifetime. The million are devoid of sentiment, and care as little for you or me as if we belonged to the moon. We live the week over in the Sunday's paper, or are decently interred in some obituary at the month's

end! It is not surprising that we are forgotten so soon after we quit this mortal stage; we are scarcely noticed while we are on it. It is not merely that our names are not known in China—they have hardly been heard of in the next street. We are hand and glove with the universe, and think the obligation is mutual. This is an evident fallacy. If this, however, does not trouble us now, it will not hereafter. A handful of dust can have no quarrel to pick with its neighbours, or complaint to make against Providence, and might well exclaim, if it had but an understanding and a tongue, "Go thy ways, old world, swing round in blue ether, voluble to every age, you and I shall no more jostle!"

It is amazing how soon the rich and titled, and even some of those who have wielded great political power, are forgotten.

> "A little rule, a little sway,
> Is all the great and mighty have
> Betwixt the cradle and the grave"—

and, after its short date, they hardly leave a name behind them. "A great man's memory may, at the common rate, survive him half a year." His heirs and successors take his titles, his power, and his wealth—all that made him considerable or courted by others; and he has left nothing else behind him either to delight or benefit the world. Posterity are not by any means so disinterested as they are supposed to be. They give their gratitude and admiration only in return for benefits conferred. They cherish the memory of those to whom they are indebted for instruction and delight; and they cherish it just in proportion to the instruction and delight they are conscious they receive. The sentiment of admiration springs immediately from this ground, and cannot be otherwise than well founded.

The effeminate clinging to life as such, as a general or abstract idea, is the effect of a highly civilised and artificial state of society. Men formerly plunged into all the vicissitudes and dangers of war, or staked their all upon a single die, or some one passion, which if they could not have gratified, life became a burden to them—now our strongest passion is to think, our chief amusement is to read new plays, new poems, new novels, and this we may do at our leisure, in perfect security, *ad infinitum*. If we look into the old histories and romances, before the *belles-lettres* neutralised human affairs and reduced passion to a state of mental equivocation, we find the heroes and heroines not setting their lives "at a pin's fee," but rather courting opportunities of throwing them away in very wantonness of spirit. They raise their fondness for some favourite pursuit to its height, to a pitch of madness, and think no price too dear to pay for its full gratification. Everything else

is dross. They go to death as to a bridal bed, and sacrifice themselves or others without remorse at the shrine of love, of honour, of religion, or any other prevailing feeling. Romeo runs his "sea-sick, weary bark upon the rocks" of death the instant he finds himself deprived of his Juliet; and she clasps his neck in their last agonies, and follows him to the same fatal shore. One strong idea takes possession of the mind and overrules every other; and even life itself, joyless without that, becomes an object of indifference or loathing. There is at least more of imagination in such a state of things, more vigour of feeling and promptitude to act than in our lingering, languid, protracted attachment to life for its own poor sake. It is, perhaps, also better, as well as more heroical, to strike at some daring or darling object, and if we fail in that, to take the consequences manfully, than to renew the lease of a tedious, spiritless, charmless existence, merely (as Pierre says) "to lose it afterwards in some vile brawl" for some worthless object. Was there not a spirit of martyrdom as well as a spice of the reckless energy of barbarism in this bold defiance of death? Had not religion something to do with it; the implicit belief in a future life, which rendered this of less value, and embodied something beyond it to the imagination; so that the rough soldier, the infatuated lover, the valorous knight, &c., could afford to throw away the present venture, and take a leap into the arms of futurity, which the modern sceptic shrinks back from, with all his boasted reason and vain philosophy, weaker than a woman! I cannot help thinking so myself; but I have endeavoured to explain this point before, and will not enlarge further on it here.

A life of action and danger moderates the dread of death. It not only gives us fortitude to bear pain, but teaches us at every step the precarious tenure on which we hold our present being. Sedentary and studious men are the most apprehensive on this score. Dr. Johnson was an instance in point. A few years seemed to him soon over, compared with those sweeping contemplations on time and infinity with which he had been used to pose himself. In the *still-life* of a man of letters there was no obvious reason for a change. He might sit in an arm-chair and pour out cups of tea to all eternity. Would it had been possible for him to do so! The most rational cure, after all, for the inordinate fear of death is to set a just value on life. If we merely wish to continue on the scene to indulge our headstrong humours and tormenting passions, we had better begone at once: and if we only cherish a fondness for existence according to the good we derive from it, the pang we feel at parting with it will not be very severe!

THE FIGHT.

[This Essay first appeared in *The New Monthly Magazine* in 1822. It was reprinted in *Hazlitt's Literary Remains*, 1836, and again in the third Edition of *Table-Talk*, edited by his son, 1845.]

——"The *fight*, the *fight's* the thing,
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king."

Where there's a will, there's a way.—I said so to myself, as I walked down Chancery Lane, about half-past six o'clock on Monday the 10th of December, to inquire at Jack Randall's where the fight the next day was to be; and I found the proverb nothing "musty" in the present instance. I was determined to see this fight, come what would, and see it I did in great style. It was my *first fight*, yet it more than answered my expectations. . . .

I was going down Chancery Lane, thinking to ask at Jack Randall's where the fight was to be, when, looking through the glass-door of the Hole in the Wall, I heard a gentleman asking the same question *at* Mrs. Randall, as the author of "Waverley" would express it. Now Mrs. Randall stood answering the gentleman's question, with all the authenticity of the Lady of the Champion of the Light Weights. Thinks I, I'll wait till this person comes out, and learn from him how it is. For, to say a truth, I was not fond of going into this house-of-call for heroes and philosophers, ever since the owner of it (for Jack is no gentleman) threatened once upon a time to kick me out of doors for wanting a mutton-chop at his hospitable board, when the conqueror in thirteen battles was more full of *blue ruin* than of good manners. I was the more mortified at this repulse, inasmuch as I heard Mr. James Simpkins, hosier in the Strand, one day when the character of the Hole in the Wall was brought in question, observe, "The house is a very good house, and the company quite genteel: I have been there myself!" Remembering this unkind treatment of mine host, to which mine hostess was also a party, and not wishing to put her in unquiet thoughts at a time jubilant like the present, I waited at the door, when who should issue forth but my friend Joe P——s, and seeing him turn suddenly up Chancery Lane with that quick jerk and impatient stride which distinguish a lover of the FANCY, I said, "I'll be hanged if that fellow is not going to the fight, and is on his way to get me to go with him." So it proved in effect, and we agreed to adjourn to my lodgings to discuss measures with that cordiality

which makes old friends like new, and new friends like old, on great occasions. We are cold to others only when we are dull in ourselves, and have neither thoughts nor feelings to impart to them. Give a man a topic in his head, a throb of pleasure in his heart, and he will be glad to share it with the first person he meets. Joe and I, though we seldom meet, were an *alter idem* on this memorable occasion, and had not an idea that we did not candidly impart; and "so carelessly did we fleet the time," that I wish no better, when there is another fight, than to have him for a companion on my journey down, and to return with my friend Jack Pigott, talking of what was to happen or of what did happen, with a noble subject always at hand, and liberty to digress to others whenever they offered. Indeed, on my repeating the lines from Spenser in an involuntary fit of enthusiasm,

> "What more felicity can fall to creature,
> Than to enjoy delight with liberty?"

my last-named ingenious friend stopped me by saying that this, translated into the vulgate, meant "*Going to see a fight.*"

Joe and I could not settle about the method of going down. He said there was a caravan, he understood, to start from Tom Belcher's at two, which would go there *right out* and back again the next day. Now, I never travel all night, and said I should get a cast to Newbury by one of the mails. Joe swore the thing was impossible, and I could only answer that I had made up my mind to it. In short, he seemed to me to waver, said he only came to see if I was going, had letters to write, a cause coming on the day after, and faintly said at parting (for I was bent on setting out that moment), "Well, we meet at Philippi?" I made the best of my way to Piccadilly. The mail-coach stand was bare. "They are all gone," said I; "this is always the way with me—in the instant I lose the future—if I had not stayed to pour out that last cup of tea, I should have been just in time;"—and cursing my folly and ill-luck together, without inquiring at the coach-office whether the mails were gone or not, I walked on in despite, and to punish my own dilatoriness and want of determination. At any rate, I would not turn back: I might get to Hounslow, or perhaps farther, to be on my road the next morning. I passed Hyde park corner (my Rubicon), and trusted to fortune. Suddenly I heard the clattering of a Brentford stage, and the fight rushed full upon my fancy. I argued (not unwisely) that even a Brentford coachman was better company than my own thoughts (such as they were just then), and at his invitation mounted the box with him. I immediately stated my case to

him—namely, my quarrel with myself for missing the Bath or Bristol mail, and my determination to get on in consequence as well as I could, without any disparagement or insulting comparison between longer or shorter stages. It is a maxim with me that stage-coaches, and consequently stage-coachmen, are respectable in proportion to the distance they have to travel: so I said nothing on that subject to my Brentford friend. Any incipient tendency to an abstract proposition, or (as he might have construed it) to a personal reflection of this kind, was, however, nipped in the bud; for I had no sooner declared indignantly that I had missed the mails, than he flatly denied that they were gone along, and lo! at the instant three of them drove by in rapid, provoking, orderly succession, as if they would devour the ground before them. Here again I seemed in the contradictory situation of the man in Dryden who exclaims,

"I follow Fate, which does too hard pursue!"

If I had stopped to inquire at the White Horse Cellar, which would not have taken me a minute, I should now have been driving down the road in all the dignified unconcern and *ideal* perfection of mechanical conveyance. The Bath mail I had set my mind upon, and I had missed it, as I miss everything else, by my own absurdity, in putting the will for the deed, and aiming at ends without employing means. "Sir," said he of the Brentford, "the Bath mail will be up presently; my brother-in-law drives it, and I will engage to stop him if there is a place empty." I almost doubted my good genius; but, sure enough, up it drove like lightning, and stopped directly at the call of the Brentford Jehu. I would not have believed this possible, but the brother-in-law of a mail-coach driver is himself no mean man. I was transferred without loss of time from the top of one coach to that of the other, desired the guard to pay my fare to the Brentford coachman for me, as I had no change, was accommodated with a greatcoat, put up my umbrella to keep off a drizzling mist, and we began to cut through the air like an arrow. The milestones disappeared one after another, the rain kept off; Tom Turtle[1] the trainer sat before me on the coach-box, with whom I exchanged civilities as a gentleman going to the fight; the passion that had transported me an hour before was subdued to pensive regret and conjectural musing on the next day's battle; I was promised a place inside at Reading, and upon the whole I thought myself a lucky fellow. Such is the force of imagination! On the outside of any other coach on the 10th of December, with a Scotch

[1] John Thurtell, to wit.

mist drizzling through the cloudy moonlight air, I should have been cold, comfortless, impatient, and, no doubt, wet through; but seated on the Royal-mail, I felt warm and comfortable; the air did me good, the ride did me good, I was pleased with the progress we had made, and confident that all would go well through the journey. When I got inside at Reading, I found Turtle and a stout valetudinarian, whose costume bespoke him one of the FANCY, and who had risen from a three months' sick-bed to get into the mail to see the fight. They were intimate, and we fell into a lively discourse. My friend the trainer was confined in his topics to fighting dogs and men, to bears and badgers; beyond this he was "quite chapfallen," not a word to throw at a dog, or indeed very wisely fell asleep, when any other game was started. The whole art of training (I, however, learnt from him) consists in two things, exercise and abstinence, abstinence and exercise, repeated alternately and without end. A yolk of an egg with a spoonful of rum in it is the first thing in a morning, and then a walk of six miles till breakfast. This meal consists of a plentiful supply of tea and toast and beefsteaks. Then another six or seven miles till dinner-time, and another supply of solid beef or mutton with a pint of porter, and perhaps, at the utmost, a couple of glasses of sherry. Martin trains on water, but this increases his infirmity on another very dangerous side. The Gas-man takes now and then a chirping glass (under the rose) to console him, during a six weeks' probation, for the absence of Mrs. Hickman—an agreeable woman, with (I understand) a pretty fortune of two hundred pounds. How matter presses on me! What stubborn things are facts! How inexhaustible is nature and art! "It is well," as I once heard Mr. Richmond observe, "to see a variety." He was speaking of cock-fighting as an edifying spectacle. I cannot deny but that one learns more of what *is* (I do not say of what *ought to be*) in this desultory mode of practical study than from reading the same book twice over, even though it should be a moral treatise. Where was I? I was sitting at dinner with the candidate for the honours of the ring, "where good digestion waits on appetite, and health on both." Then follows an hour of social chat and native glee; and afterwards, to another breathing over heathy hill or dale. Back to supper, and then to bed, and up by six again—our hero

> "Follows so the ever-running sun,
> With profitable *ardour*"—

to the day that brings him victory or defeat in the green fairy circle. Is not this life more sweet than mine? I was going to say; but I will not libel any life by comparing it to mine, which is (at

the date of these presents) bitter as coloquintida and the dregs of aconitum!

The invalid in the Bath mail soared a pitch above the trainer, and did not sleep so sound, because he had "more figures and more fantasies." We talked the hours away merrily. He had faith in surgery, for he had three ribs set right, that had been broken in a *turn-up* at Belcher's, but thought physicians old women, for they had no antidote in their catalogue for brandy. An indigestion is an excellent commonplace for two people that never met before. By way of ingratiating myself, I told him the story of my doctor, who, on my earnestly representing to him that I thought his regimen had done me harm, assured me that the whole pharmacopœia contained nothing comparable to the prescription he had given me; and, as a proof of its undoubted efficacy, said that "he had had one gentleman with my complaint under his hands for the last fifteen years." This anecdote made my companion shake the rough sides of his three greatcoats with boisterous laughter; and Turtle, starting out of his sleep, swore he knew how the fight would go, for he had had a dream about it. Sure enough, the rascal told us how the three first rounds went off, but "his dream," like others, "denoted a foregone conclusion." He knew his men. The moon now rose in silver state, and I ventured, with some hesitation, to point out this object of placid beauty, with the blue serene beyond, to the man of science, to which his ear he "seriously inclined," the more as it gave promise *d'un beau jour* for the morrow, and showed the ring undrenched by envious showers, arrayed in sunny smiles. Just then, all going on well, I thought on my friend Joe, whom I had left behind, and said innocently, "There was a blockhead of a fellow I left in town, who said there was no possibility of getting down by the mail, and talked of going by a caravan from Belcher's at two in the morning, after he had written some letters."—"Why," said he of the lapels, "I should not wonder if that was the very person we saw running about like mad from one coach-door to another, and asking if any one had seen a friend of his, a gentleman going to the fight, whom he had missed stupidly enough by staying to write a note."—"Pray, sir," said my fellow-traveller, "had he a plaid-cloak on?"—"Why, no," said I, "not at the time I left him, but he very well might afterwards, for he offered to lend me one." The plaid-cloak and the letter decided the thing. Joe, sure enough, was in the Bristol mail, which preceded us by about fifty yards. This was droll enough. We had now but a few miles to our place of destination, and the first thing I did on alighting at Newbury, both coaches stopping at the same time, was to call out, "Pray, is there a gentleman in that

mail of the name of P——s?"—"No," said Joe, borrowing something of the vein of Gilpin, "for I have just got out."—"Well!" says he, "this is lucky; but you don't know how vexed I was to miss you; for," added he, lowering his voice, "do you know, when I left you I went to Belcher's to ask about the caravan, and Mrs. Belcher said, very obligingly, she couldn't tell about that, but there were two gentlemen who had taken places by the mail and were gone on in a landau, and she could frank us. It's a pity I didn't meet with you; we could then have got down for nothing. But *mum's the word.*" It's the devil for any one to tell me a secret, for it is sure to come out in print. I do not care so much to gratify a friend, but the public ear is too great a temptation to me.

Our present business was to get beds and supper at an inn; but this was no easy task. The public-houses were full, and where you saw a light at a private house, and people poking their heads out of the casement to see what was going on, they instantly put them in and shut the window, the moment you seemed advancing with a suspicious overture for accommodation. Our guard and coachman thundered away at the outer gate of the Crown for some time without effect—such was the greater noise within; and when the doors were unbarred and we got admittance, we found a party assembled in the kitchen round a good hospitable fire, some sleeping, others drinking, others talking on politics and on the fight. A tall English yeoman (something like Matthews in the face, and quite as great a wag)—

"A lusty man to ben an abbot able"—

was making such a prodigious noise about rent and taxes, and the price of corn now and formerly, that he had prevented us from being heard at the gate. The first thing I heard him say was to a shuffling fellow who wanted to be off a bet for a shilling glass of brandy and water—"Confound it, man, don't be *insipid!*" Thinks I, that is a good phrase. It was a good omen. He kept it up so all night, nor flinched with the approach of morning. He was a fine fellow, with sense, wit, and spirit, a hearty body and a joyous mind, free-spoken, frank, convivial—one of that true English breed that went with Harry the Fifth to the siege of Harfleur—"standing like greyhounds in the slips," &c. We ordered tea and eggs (beds were soon found to be out of the question), and this fellow's conversation was *sauce piquante.* It did one's heart good to see him brandish his oaken towel and to hear him talk. He made mince-meat of a drunken, stupid, red-faced, quarrelsome, frowsy farmer, whose nose "he moralised into a thousand similes," making it out a firebrand like Bar-

dolph's. "I'll tell you what, my friend," says he, "the landlady has only to keep you here to save fire and candle. If one was to touch your nose, it would go off like a piece of charcoal." At this the other only grinned like an idiot, the sole variety in his purple face being his little peering grey eyes and yellow teeth; called for another glass, swore he would not stand it; and after many attempts to provoke his humorous antagonist to single combat, which the other turned off (after working him up to a ludicrous pitch of choler) with great adroitness, he fell quietly asleep with a glass of liquor in his hand, which he could not lift to his head. His laughing persecutor made a speech over him, and turning to the opposite side of the room, where they were all sleeping in the midst of this "loud and furious fun," said, "There's a scene, by G—d! for Hogarth to paint. I think he and Shakspeare were our two best men at copying life." This confirmed me in my good opinion of him. Hogarth, Shakspeare, and Nature were just enough for him (indeed for any man) to know. I said, "You read Cobbett, don't you? At least," says I, "you talk just as well as he writes." He seemed to doubt this. But I said, "We have an hour to spare; if you'll get pen, ink, and paper, and keep on talking, I'll write down what you say; and if it doesn't make a capital 'Political Register,' I'll forfeit my head. You have kept me alive to-night, however. I don't know what I should have done without you." He did not dislike this view of the thing, nor my asking if he was not about the size of Jem Belcher; and told me soon afterwards, in the confidence of friendship, that "the circumstance which had given him nearly the greatest concern in his life was Cribb's beating Jem after he had lost his eye by racket-playing."—The morning dawns; that dim but yet clear light appears, which weighs like solid bars of metal on the sleepless eyelids; the guests dropped down from their chambers one by one—but it was too late to think of going to bed now (the clock was on the stroke of seven); we had nothing for it but to find a barber's (the pole that glittered in the morning sun lighted us to his shop), and then a nine miles' march to Hungerford. The day was fine, the sky was blue, the mists retiring from the marshy ground, the path was tolerably dry, the sitting-up all night had not done us much harm—at least the cause was good; we talked of this and that with amicable difference, roving and sipping of many subjects, but still invariably we returned to the fight. At length, a mile to the left of Hungerford, on a gentle eminence, we saw the ring, surrounded by covered carts, gigs, and carriages, of which hundreds had passed us on the road; Joe gave a youthful shout, and we hastened down a narrow lane to the scene of action.

Reader, have you ever seen a fight? If not, you have a pleasure to come, at least if it is a fight like that between the Gas-man and Bill Neate. The crowd was very great when we arrived on the spot; open carriages were coming up, with streamers flying and music playing, and the country-people were pouring in over hedge and ditch in all directions, to see their hero beat or be beaten. The odds were still on Gas, but only about five to four. Gully had been down to try Neate, and had backed him considerably, which was a damper to the sanguine confidence of the adverse party. About £200,000 were pending. Gas says he has lost £3000, which were promised him by different gentlemen if he had won. He had presumed too much on himself, which had made others presume on him. This spirited and formidable young fellow seems to have taken for his motto the old maxim, that "there are three things necessary to success in life—*Impudence! Impudence! Impudence!*" It is so in matters of opinion, but not in the FANCY, which is the most practical of all things, though even here confidence is half the battle, but only half. Our friend had vapoured and swaggered too much, as if he wanted to grin and bully his adversary out of the fight. "Alas! the Bristol man was not so tamed!"—"This is the *gravedigger*" (would Tom Hickman exclaim in the moments of intoxication from gin and success, showing his tremendous right hand); "this will send many of them to their long homes; I haven't done with them yet!" Why should he—though he had licked four of the best men within the hour—why should he threaten to inflict dishonourable chastisement on my old master Richmond, a veteran going off the stage, and who has borne his sable honours meekly? Magnanimity, my dear Tom, and bravery should be inseparable. Or why should he go up to his antagonist, the first time he ever saw him at the Fives-court, and measuring him from head to foot with a glance of contempt, as Achilles surveyed Hector, say to him, "What, are you Bill Neate? I'll knock more blood out of that great carcass of thine, this day fortnight, than you ever knocked out of a bullock's!" It was not manly,—'twas not fighter-like. If he was sure of the victory (as he was not), the less said about it the better. Modesty should accompany the FANCY as its shadow. The best men were always the best behaved. Jem Belcher, the Game Chicken (before whom the Gas-man could not have lived), were civil, silent men. So is Cribb; so is Tom Belcher, the most elegant of sparrers, and not a man for every one to take by the nose. I enlarged on this topic in the mail (while Turtle was asleep), and said very wisely (as I thought) that impertinence was a part of no profession. A boxer was bound to beat his man, but not to thrust his

fist, either actually or by implication, in every one's face. Even a highwayman, in the way of trade, may blow out your brains, but if he uses foul language at the same time, I should say he was no gentleman. A boxer, I would infer, need not be a blackguard or a coxcomb, more than another. Perhaps I press this point too much on a fallen man—Mr. Thomas Hickman has by this time learnt that first of all lessons, "That man was made to mourn." He has lost nothing by the late fight but his presumption; and that every man may do as well without! By an over-display of this quality, however, the public had been prejudiced against him, and the *knowing ones* were taken in. Few but those who had bet on him wished Gas to win. With my own prepossessions on the subject, the result of the 11th of December appeared to me as fine a piece of poetical justice as I had ever witnessed. The difference of weight between the two combatants (fourteen stone to twelve) was nothing to the sporting men. Great, heavy, clumsy, long-armed Bill Neate kicked the beam in the scale of the Gas-man's vanity. The amateurs were frightened at his big words, and thought they would make up for the difference of six feet and five feet nine Truly, the FANCY are not men of imagination. They judge of what has been, and cannot conceive of anything that is to be. The Gas-man had won hitherto; therefore he must beat a man half as big again as himself—and that to a certainty. Besides, there are as many feuds, factions, prejudices, pedantic notions, in the FANCY as in the State or in the schools. Mr. Gully is almost the only cool, sensible man among them, who exercises an unbiassed discretion, and is not a slave to his passions in these matters. But enough of reflections, and to our tale. The day, as I have said, was fine for a December morning. The grass was wet and the ground miry, and ploughed up with multitudinous feet, except that, within the ring itself, there was a spot of virgin-green, closed in and unprofaned by vulgar tread, that shone with dazzling brightness in the midday sun. For it was now noon, and we had an hour to wait. This is the trying time. It is then the heart sickens, as you think what the two champions are about, and how short a time will determine their fate. After the first blow is struck there is no opportunity for nervous apprehensions; you are swallowed up in the immediate interest of the scene—but

> "Between the acting of a dreadful thing
> And the first motion, all the interim is
> Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream."

I found it so as I felt the sun's rays clinging to my back, and

saw the white wintry clouds sink below the verge of the horizon. "So," I thought, "my fairest hopes have faded from my sight!—so will the Gas-man's glory, or that of his adversary, vanish in an hour." The *swells* were parading in their white box-coats, the outer ring was cleared with some bruises on the heads and shins of the rustic assembly (for the *Cockneys* had been distanced by the sixty-six miles); the time drew near; I had got a good stand; a bustle, a buzz, ran through the crowd; and from the opposite side entered Neate, between his second and bottle-holder. He rolled along, swathed in his loose greatcoat, his knock-knees bending under his huge bulk; and, with a modest, cheerful air, threw his hat into the ring. He then just looked round, and begun quietly to undress; when from the other side there was a similar rush and an opening made, and the Gas-man came forward with a conscious air of anticipated triumph, too much like the cock-of-the-walk. He strutted about more than became a hero, sucked oranges with a supercilious air, and threw away the skin with a toss of his head, and went up and looked at Neate, which was an act of supererogation. The only sensible thing he did was, as he strode away from the modern Ajax, to fling out his arms, as if he wanted to try whether they would do their work that day. By this time they had stripped, and presented a strong contrast in appearance. If Neate was like Ajax, "with Atlantean shoulders, fit to bear" the pugilistic reputation of all Bristol, Hickman might be compared to Diomed, light, vigorous, elastic, and his back glistened in the sun, as he moved about, like a panther's hide. There was now a dead pause—attention was awe-struck. Who at that moment, big with a great event, did not draw his breath short—did not feel his heart throb? All was ready. They tossed up for the sun, and the Gas-man won. They were led up to the *scratch*—shook hands, and went at it.

In the first round every one thought it was all over. After making play a short time, the Gas-man flew at his adversary like a tiger, struck five blows in as many seconds, three first, and then following him as he staggered back, two more, right and left, and down he fell, a mighty ruin. There was a shout, and I said, "There is no standing this." Neate seemed like a lifeless lump of flesh and bone, round which the Gas-man's blows played with the rapidity of electricity or lightning, and you imagined he would only be lifted up to be knocked down again. It was as if Hickman held a sword or a fire in that right hand of his, and directed it against an unarmed body. They met again, and Neate seemed, not cowed, but particularly cautious. I saw his teeth clenched together and his brows knit close against the sun. He held out both his arms

at full length straight before him, like two sledgehammers, and raised his left an inch or two higher. The Gas-man could not get over this guard—they struck mutually and fell, but without advantage on either side. It was the same in the next round; but the balance of power was thus restored—the fate of the battle was suspended. No one could tell how it would end. This was the only moment in which opinion was divided; for, in the next, the Gas-man aiming a mortal blow at his adversary's neck with his right hand, and failing from the length he had to reach, the other returned it with his left at full swing, planted a tremendous blow on his cheek-bone and eyebrow, and made a red ruin of that side of his face. The Gas-man went down, and there was another shout—a roar of triumph as the waves of fortune rolled tumultuously from side to side. This was a settler. Hickman got up, and "grinned horrible a ghastly smile," yet he was evidently dashed in his opinion of himself; it was the first time he had ever been so punished; all one side of his face was perfect scarlet, and his right eye was closed in dingy blackness, as he advanced to the fight, less confident, but still determined. After one or two rounds, not receiving another such remembrancer, he rallied and went at it with his former impetuosity. But in vain. His strength had been weakened, —his blows could not tell at such a distance,—he was obliged to fling himself at his adversary, and could not strike from his feet; and almost as regularly as he flew at him with his right hand, Neate warded the blow, or drew back out of its reach, and felled him with the return of his left. There was little cautious sparring —no half-hits—no tapping and trifling, none of the *petit-maitreship* of the art—they were almost all knock-down blows: the fight was a good stand-up fight. The wonder was the half-minute time. If there had been a minute or more allowed between each round, it would have been intelligible how they should by degrees recover strength and resolution; but to see two men smashed to the ground, smeared with gore, stunned, senseless, the breath beaten out of their bodies; and then, before you recover from the shock, to see them rise up with new strength and courage, stand ready to inflict or receive mortal offence, and rush upon each other "like two clouds over the Caspian"—this is the most astonishing thing of all: this is the high and heroic state of man! From this time forward the event became more certain every round; and about the twelfth it seemed as if it must have been over. Hickman generally stood with his back to me; but in the scuffle he had changed positions, and Neate just then made a tremendous lunge at him, and hit him full in the face. It was doubtful whether he would fall backwards or

forwards; he hung suspended for a minute or two, and then fell back, throwing his hands in the air, and with his face lifted up to the sky. I never saw anything more terrific than his aspect just before he fell. All traces of life, of natural expression, were gone from him. His face was like a human skull, a death's-head spouting blood. The eyes were filled with blood, the nose streamed with blood, the mouth gaped blood. He was not like an actual man, but like a preternatural, spectral appearance, or like one of the figures in Dante's "Inferno." Yet he fought on after this for several rounds, still striking the first desperate blow, and Neate standing on the defensive, and using the same cautious guard to the last, as if he had still all his work to do; and it was not till the Gas-man was so stunned in the seventeenth or eighteenth round that his senses forsook him, and he could not come to time, that the battle was declared over. Ye who despise the FANCY, do something to show as much pluck or as much self-possession as this, before you assume a superiority which you have never given a single proof of by any one action in the whole course of your lives!—When the Gas-man came to himself, the first words he uttered were, "Where am I? What is the matter?"—"Nothing is the matter, Tom,—you have lost the battle, but you are the bravest man alive." And Jackson whispered to him, "I am collecting a purse for you, Tom."—Vain sounds, and unheard at that moment! Neate instantly went up and shook him cordially by the hand, and seeing some old acquaintance, began to flourish with his fists, calling out, "Ah! you always said I couldn't fight—what do you think now?" But all in good-humour, and without any appearance of arrogance; only it was evident Bill Neate was pleased that he had won the fight. When it was over, I asked Cribb if he did not think it was a good one. He said, "*Pretty well!*" The carrier-pigeons now mounted into the air, and one of them flew with the news of her husband's victory to the bosom of Mrs. Neate. Alas for Mrs. Hickman!

Mais au revoir, as Sir Fopling Flutter says. I went down with Joe P——s; I returned with Jack Pigott, whom I met on the ground. Tom's is a rattle-brain; Pigott is a sentimentalist. Now, under favour, I am a sentimentalist too—therefore I say nothing, but that the interest of the excursion did not flag as I came back. Pigott and I marched along the causeway leading from Hungerford to Newbury, now observing the effect of a brilliant sun on the tawny meads or moss-coloured cottages, now exulting in the fight, now digressing to some topic of general and elegant literature. My friend was dressed in character for the occasion, or like one of the FANCY; that is, with a double portion of greatcoats,

clogs, and overhauls; and just as we had agreed with a couple of country-lads to carry his superfluous wearing-apparel to the next town, we were overtaken by a return post-chaise, into which I got, Pigott preferring a seat on the bar. There were two strangers already in the chaise, and on their observing they supposed I had been to the fight, I said I had, and concluded they had done the same. They appeared, however, a little shy and sore on the subject; and it was not till after several hints dropped and questions put, that it turned out that they had missed it. One of these friends had undertaken to drive the other there in his gig: they had set out, to make sure work, the day before at three in the afternoon. The owner of the one-horse vehicle scorned to ask his way, and drove right on to Bagshot, instead of turning off at Hounslow: there they stopped all night, and set off the next day across the country to Reading, from whence they took coach, and got down within a mile or two of Hungerford, just half-an-hour after the fight was over. This might be safely set down as one of the miseries of human life. We parted with these two gentlemen who had been to see the fight, but had returned as they went, at Wolhampton, where we were promised beds (an irresistible temptation, for Pigott had passed the preceding night at Hungerford as we had done at Newbury), and we turned into an old bow-windowed parlour with a carpet and a snug fire; and after devouring a quantity of tea, toast, and eggs, sat down to consider, during an hour of philosophic leisure, what we should have for supper. In the midst of an Epicurean deliberation between a roasted fowl and mutton-chops with mashed potatoes, we were interrupted by an inroad of Goths and Vandals—*O procul este profani*—not real flash-men, but interlopers, noisy pretenders, butchers from Tothill-fields, brokers from Whitechapel, who called immediately for pipes and tobacco, hoping it would not be disagreeable to the gentlemen, and began to insist that it was *a cross*. Pigott withdrew from the smoke and noise into another room, and left me to dispute the point with them for a couple of hours *sans intermission* by the dial. The next morning we rose refreshed; and on observing that Jack had a pocket volume in his hand, in which he read in the intervals of our discourse, I inquired what it was, and learned, to my particular satisfaction, that it was a volume of the "New Eloise." Ladies, after this, will you contend that a love for the FANCY is incompatible with the cultivation of sentiment?—We jogged on as before, my friend setting me up in a genteel drab greatcoat and green silk handkerchief (which I must say became me exceedingly), and after stretching our legs for a few miles, and

seeing Jack Randall, Ned Turner, and Scroggins pass on the top of one of the Bath coaches, we engaged with the driver of the second to take us to London for the usual fee. I got inside, and found three other passengers. One of them was an old gentleman with an aquiline nose, powdered hair, and a pigtail, and who looked as if he had played many a rubber at the Bath rooms. I said to myself, "He is very like Mr. Windham; I wish he would enter into conversation, that I might hear what fine observations would come from those finely-turned features." However, nothing passed, till, stopping to dine at Reading, some inquiry was made by the company about the fight, and I gave (as the reader may believe) an eloquent and animated description of it. When we got into the coach again, the old gentleman, after a graceful exordium, said he had, when a boy, been to a fight between the famous Broughton and George Stevenson, who was called the *Fighting Coachman*, in the year 1770, with the late Mr. Windham. This beginning flattered the spirit of prophecy within me, and riveted my attention. He went on—"George Stevenson was coachman to a friend of my father's. He was an old man when I saw him some years afterwards. He took hold of his own arm and said, 'There was muscle here once, but now it is no more than this young gentleman's.' He added, 'Well, no matter; I have been here long; I am willing to go hence, and I hope I have done no more harm than another man.' Once," said my unknown companion, "I asked him if he had ever beat Broughton. He said Yes; that he had fought with him three times, and the last time he fairly beat him, though the world did not allow it. 'I'll tell you how it was, master. When the seconds lifted us up in the last round, we were so exhausted that neither of us could stand, and we fell upon one another, and as Master Broughton fell uppermost, the mob gave it in his favour, and he was said to have won the battle. But the fact was, that as his second (John Cuthbert) lifted him up, and said to him, "I'll fight no more, I've had enough;" which,' says Stevenson, 'you know, gave me the victory. And to prove to you that this was the case, when John Cuthbert was on his deathbed, and they asked him if there was anything on his mind which he wished to confess, he answered, "Yes; that there was one thing he wished to set right, for that certainly Master Stevenson won the last fight with Master Broughton; for he whispered him as he lifted him up in the last round of all, that he had had enough."' This," said the Bath gentleman, "was a bit of human nature;" and I have written this account of the fight on purpose that it might not be lost to the world. He also

stated as a proof of the candour of mind in this class of men, that Stevenson acknowledged that Broughton could have beat him in his best day; but that he (Broughton) was getting old in their last rencounter. When we stopped in Piccadilly, I wanted to ask the gentleman some questions about the late Mr. Windham, but had not courage. I got out, resigned my coat and green silk handkerchief to Pigott (loth to part with these ornaments of life), and walked home in high spirits.

P.S.—Joe called upon me the next day, to ask me if I did not think the fight was a complete thing. I said I thought it was. I hope he will relish my account of it.

ON THE CONDUCT OF LIFE; OR, ADVICE TO A SCHOOLBOY.[1]

[This paper appeared in a Paris Edition of *Table-Talk*, 1825. It was printed in the *Literary Remains*, 1836; and in the third Edition of *Table-Talk*, edited by his son, 1846. It is one of the most pleasing of his compositions, written with much earnestness and feeling, and in an unadorned style. The pages relating to love and marriage are omitted. Of all able writers, Hazlitt had the least knowledge of the female character. It is a subject on which he seldom ventures, and never successfully.]

My dear little fellow,—You are now going to settle at school, and may consider this as your first entrance into the world. As my health is so indifferent, and I may not be with you long, I wish to leave you some advice (the best I can) for your conduct in life, both that it may be of use to you, and as something to remember me by. I may at least be able to caution you against my own errors, if nothing else.

As we went along to your new place of destination, you often repeated that "you durst say they were a set of stupid, disagreeable people," meaning the people at the school. You were to blame in this. It is a good old rule to hope for the best. Always, my dear,

[1] His son, William Hazlitt, Registrar of the London Bankruptcy Court, now in his eightieth year [1889]. He is known as an author by his translations of "The Life of Luther," Michelet's "Roman Republic," Guizot's "History of Civilisation," and "The English Revolution," Thierry's "Conquest of England by the Normans," &c. He wrote a continuation of Johnson's "Lives of the Poets," and edited the first reprints of his father's works, as well as Cotton's Montaigne, and a selection of Defoe's works.

believe things to be right, till you find them the contrary; and even then, instead of irritating yourself against them, endeavour to put up with them as well as you can, if you cannot alter them. You said "you were sure you should not like the school where you were going." This was wrong. What you meant was, that you did not like to leave home. But you could not tell whether you should like the school or not till you had given it a trial. Otherwise, your saying that you should not like it was determining that you would not like it. Never anticipate evils, or, because you cannot have things exactly as you wish, make them out worse than they are, through mere spite and wilfulness.

You seemed at first to take no notice of your schoolfellows, or rather to set yourself against them, because they were strangers to you. They knew as little of you as you did of them; so that this would have been a reason for their keeping aloof from you as well, which you would have felt as a hardship. Learn never to conceive a prejudice against others because you know nothing of them. It is bad reasoning, and makes enemies of half the world. Do not think ill of them till they behave ill to you; and then strive to avoid the faults which you see in them. This will disarm their hostility sooner than pique or resentment or complaint.

I thought you were disposed to criticise the dress of some of the boys as not so good as your own. Never despise any one for anything that he cannot help—least of all, for his poverty. I would wish you to keep up appearances yourself as a defence against the idle sneers of the world, but I would not have you value yourself upon them. I hope you will neither be the dupe nor victim of vulgar prejudices. Instead of saying above, "Never despise any one for anything that he cannot help," I might have said, "Never despise any one at all;" for contempt implies a triumph over and pleasure in the ill of another. It means that you are glad and congratulate yourself on their failings or misfortunes. The sense of inferiority in others, without this indirect appeal to our self-love, is a painful feeling and not an exulting one.

You complain since, that the boys laugh at you and do not care about you, and that you are not treated as you were at home. My dear, that is one chief reason for your being sent to school, to inure you betimes to the unavoidable rubs and uncertain reception you may meet with in life. You cannot always be with me, and perhaps it is as well that you cannot. But you must not expect others to show the same concern about you as I should. You have hitherto been a spoiled child, and have been used to have your own way a good deal, both in the house and among your playfellows, with whom

you were too fond of being a leader; but you have good-nature and good sense, and will get the better of this in time. You have now got among other boys who are your equals, or bigger and stronger than yourself, and who have something else to attend to besides humouring your whims and fancies, and you feel this as a repulse or piece of injustice. But the first lesson to learn is, that there are other people in the world besides yourself. There are a number of boys in the school where you are, whose amusements and pursuits (whatever they may be) are and ought to be of as much consequence to them as yours can be to you, and to which, therefore, you must give way in your turn. The more airs of childish self-importance you give yourself, you will only expose yourself to be the more thwarted and laughed at. True equality is the only true morality or true wisdom. Remember always that you are but one among others, and you can hardly mistake your place in society. In your father's house you might do as you pleased; in the world you will find competitors at every turn. You are not born a king's son, to destroy or dictate to millions; you can only expect to share their fate, or settle your differences amicably with them. You already find it so at school; and I wish you to be reconciled to your situation as soon and with as little pain as you can.

It was my misfortune (perhaps) to be bred up among Dissenters, who look with too jaundiced an eye at others, and set too high a value on their own peculiar pretensions. From being proscribed themselves, they learn to proscribe others; and come in the end to reduce all integrity of principle and soundness of opinion within the pale of their own little communion. Those who were out of it, and did not belong to the class of *Rational Dissenters*, I was led erroneously to look upon as hardly deserving the name of rational beings. Being thus satisfied as to the select few who are "the salt of the earth," it is easy to persuade ourselves that we are at the head of them, and to fancy ourselves of more importance in the scale of true desert than all the rest of the world put together, who do not interpret a certain text of Scripture in the manner that we have been taught to do. You will (from the difference of education) be free from this bigotry, and will, I hope, avoid everything akin to the same exclusive and narrow-minded spirit. Think that the minds of men are various as their faces; that the modes and employments of life are numberless as they are necessary; that there is more than one class of merit; that though others may be wrong in some things, they are not so in all; and that countless races of men have been born, have lived and died without ever hearing of any one of those points in which you take a just pride and pleasure, and

you will not err on the side of that spiritual pride or intellectual coxcombry which has been so often the bane of the studious and learned!

I observe you have got a way of speaking of your schoolfellows as "*that* Hoare, *that* Harris," and so on, as if you meant to mark them out for particular reprobation, or did not think them good enough for you. It is a bad habit to speak disrespectfully of others; for it will lead you to think and feel uncharitably towards them. Ill names beget ill blood. Even where there may be some repeated trifling provocation, it is better to be courteous, mild, and forbearing than captious, impatient, and fretful. The faults of others too often arise out of our own ill-temper; or though they should be real, we shall not mend them by exasperating ourselves against them. Treat your playmates, as Hamlet advises Polonius to treat the players, "according to your own dignity, rather than their deserts." If you fly out at everything in them that you disapprove or think done on purpose to annoy you, you lie constantly at the mercy of their caprice, rudeness, or ill-nature. You should be more your own master.

Do not begin to quarrel with the world too soon; for, bad as it may be, it is the best we have to live in—here. If railing would have made it better, it would have been reformed long ago; but as this is not to be hoped for at present, the best way is to slide through it as contentedly and innocently as we may. The worst fault it has is want of charity; and calling *knave* and *fool* at every turn will not cure this failing. Consider (as a matter of vanity) that if there were not so many knaves and fools as we find, the wise and honest would not be those rare and shining characters that they are allowed to be; and (as a matter of philosophy) that if the world be really incorrigible in this respect, it is a reflection to make one sad, not angry. We may laugh or weep at the madness of mankind: we have no right to vilify them, for our own sakes or theirs. Misanthropy is not the disgust of the mind at human nature, but with itself; or it is laying its own exaggerated vices and foul blots at the door of others! Do not, however, mistake what I have here said. I would not have you, when you grow up, adopt the low and sordid fashion of palliating existing abuses or of putting the best face upon the worst things. I only mean that indiscriminate, unqualified satire can do little good, and that those who indulge in the most revolting speculations on human nature do not themselves always set the fairest examples or strive to prevent its lower degradation. They seem rather willing to reduce it to their theoretical standard. For the rest, the very outcry that is made (if sincere) shows that things cannot be quite so bad as they

are represented. The abstract hatred and scorn of vice implies the capacity for virtue: the impatience expressed at the most striking instances of deformity proves the innate idea and love of beauty in the human mind. The best antidote I can recommend to you hereafter against the disheartening effect of such writings as those of Rochefoucauld, Mandeville, and others, will be to look at the pictures of Raphael and Correggio. You need not be altogether ashamed, my dear little boy, of belonging to a species which could produce such faces as those; nor despair of doing something worthy of a laudable ambition, when you see what such hands have wrought! You will, perhaps, one day have reason to thank me for this advice.

As to your studies and school-exercises, I wish you to learn Latin, French, and dancing. I would insist upon the last more particularly, both because it is more likely to be neglected, and because it is of the greatest consequence to your success in life. Everything almost depends upon first impressions; and these depend (besides *person*, which is not in our power) upon two things, *dress* and *address*, which every one may command with proper attention. These are the small coin in the intercourse of life, which are continually in request; and perhaps you will find at the year's end, or towards the close of life, that the daily insults, coldness, or contempt to which you have been exposed by a neglect of such superficial recommendations are hardly atoned for by the few proofs of esteem or admiration which your integrity or talents have been able to extort in the course of it. When we habitually disregard those things which we know will ensure the favourable opinion of others, it shows we set that opinion at defiance, or consider ourselves above it, which no one ever did with impunity. An inattention to our own persons implies a disrespect to others, and may often be traced no less to a want of good-nature than of good sense. The old maxim, *Desire to please, and you will infallibly please*, explains the whole matter. If there is a tendency to vanity and affectation on this side of the question, there is an equal alloy of pride and obstinacy on the opposite one.—Slovenliness may at any time be cured by an effort of resolution, but a graceful carriage requires an early habit, and, in most cases, the aid of the dancing-master. I would not have you, from not knowing how to enter a room properly, stumble at the very threshold in the good graces of those on whom it is possible the fate of your future life may depend. Nothing creates a greater prejudice against any one than awkwardness. A person who is confused in manner and gesture seems to have done something wrong, or as if he was conscious of no one qualification to build a confidence in himself upon. On the other hand, openness, freedom, self-poses-

sion, set others at ease with you by showing that you are on good terms with yourself. Grace in women gains the affections sooner, and secures them longer, than anything else—it is an outward and visible sign of an inward harmony of soul—as the want of it in men, as if the mind and body equally hitched in difficulties and were distracted with doubts, is the greatest impediment in the career of gallantry and road to the female heart. Another thing I would caution you against is not to pore over your books till you are bent almost double—a habit you will never be able to get the better of, and which you will find of serious ill consequence. *A stoop in the shoulders* sinks a man in public and in private estimation. You are at present straight enough, and you walk with boldness and spirit. Do nothing to take away the use of your limbs or the spring and elasticity of your muscles. As to all worldly advantages, it is to the full of as much importance that your deportment should be erect and manly as your actions.

You will naturally find out all this and fall into it, if your attention is drawn out sufficiently to what is passing around you; and this will be the case, unless you are absorbed too much in books and those sedentary studies

> "Which waste the marrow, and consume the brain."

You are, I think, too fond of reading as it is. As one means of avoiding excess in this way, I would wish you to make it a rule never to read at meal-times, nor in company when there is any (even the most trivial) conversation going on, nor ever to let your eagerness to learn encroach upon your play-hours. Books are but one inlet of knowledge; and the pores of the mind, like those of the body, should be left open to all impressions. I applied too close to my studies, soon after I was of your age, and hurt myself irreparably by it. Whatever may be the value of learning, health and good spirits are of more.

I would have you, as I said, make yourself master of French, because you may find it of use in the commerce of life; and I would have you learn Latin, partly because I learnt it myself, and I would not have you without any of the advantages or sources of knowledge that I possessed—it would be a bar of separation between us—and secondly, because there is an atmosphere round this sort of classical ground to which that of actual life is gross and vulgar. Shut out from this garden of early sweetness, we may well exclaim—

> "How shall we part and wander down
> Into a lower world, to this obscure
> And wild? How shall we breathe in other air
> Less pure, accustom'd to immortal fruits?"

I do not think the Classics so indispensable to the cultivation of your intellect as on another account, which I have explained elsewhere, and you will have no objection to turn with me to the passage.

"The study of the Classics is less to be regarded as an exercise of the intellect than as *a discipline of humanity*. The peculiar advantage of this mode of education consists not so much in strengthening the understanding as in softening and refining the taste. It gives men liberal views; it accustoms the mind to take an interest in things foreign to itself; to love virtue for its own sake; to prefer fame to life, and glory to riches; and to fix our thoughts on the remote and permanent instead of narrow and fleeting objects. It teaches us to believe that there is something really great and excellent in the world, surviving all the shocks of accident and fluctuations of opinion, and raises us above that low and servile fear which bows only to present power and upstart authority. Rome and Athens filled a place in the history of mankind which can never be occupied again. They were two cities set on a hill, which could not be hid; all eyes have seen them, and their light shines like a mighty sea-mark into the abyss of time.

> 'Still green with bays each ancient altar stands,
> Above the reach of sacrilegious hands;
> Secure from flames, from envy's fiereer rage,
> Destructive war, and all-involving age.
> Hail, bards triumphant, born in happier days,
> Immortal heirs of universal praise!
> Whose honours with increase of ages grow,
> As streams roll down, enlarging as they flow!'

It is this feeling more than anything else which produces a marked difference between the study of the ancient and modern languages, and which, by the weight and importance of the consequences attached to the former, stamps every word with a monumental firmness. By conversing with the *mighty dead*, we imbibe sentiment with knowledge. We become strongly attached to those who can no longer either hurt or serve us, except through the influence which they exert over the mind. We feel the presence of that power which gives immortality to human thoughts and actions, and catch the flame of enthusiasm from all nations and ages."

Because, however, you have learnt Latin and Greek, and can speak a different language, do not fancy yourself of a different order of beings from those you ordinarily converse with. They perhaps know and can do more *things* than you, though you have learnt a greater variety of *names* to express the same thing by. The great object, indeed, of these studies is to be "a cure for a narrow and selfish spirit," and to carry the mind out of its petty and local prejudices

to the idea of a more general humanity. Do not fancy, because you are intimate with Homer and Virgil, that your neighbours who can never attain the same posthumous fame are to be despised, like those impudent valets who live in noble families and look down upon every one else. Though you are master of Cicero's "Orations," think it possible for a cobbler at a stall to be more eloquent than you. "But you are a scholar, and he is not." Well, then, you have that advantage over him, but it does not follow that you are to have every other. Look at the heads of the celebrated poets and philosophers of antiquity in the collection at Wilton, and you will say they answer to their works; but you will find others in the same collection whose names have hardly come down to us that are equally fine, and cast in the same classic mould. Do you imagine that all the thoughts, genius, and capacity of those old and mighty nations are contained in a few odd volumes, to be thumbed by schoolboys? This reflection is not meant to lessen your admiration of the great names to which you will be accustomed to look up, but to direct it to that solid mass of intellect and power, of which they were the most shining ornaments. I would wish you to excel in this sort of learning and to take a pleasure in it, because it is the path that has been chosen for you; but do not suppose that others do not excel equally in their line of study or exercise of skill, or that there is but one mode of excellence in art or nature. You have got on vastly beyond the point at which you set out; but others have been getting on as well as you in the same or other ways, and have kept pace with you. What then, you may ask, is the use of all the pains you have taken, if it gives you no superiority over mankind in general? It is this—You have reaped all the benefit of improvement and knowledge yourself; and further, if you had not moved forwards, you would by this time have been left behind. Envy no one, disparage no one, think yourself above no one. Their demerits will not piece out your deficiencies; nor is it a waste of time and labour for you to cultivate your own talents because you cannot bespeak a monopoly of all advantages. You are more learned than many of your acquaintance who may be more active, healthy, witty, successful in business, or expert in some elegant or useful art than you; but you have no reason to complain, if you have attained the object of your ambition. Or if you should not be able to compass this from a want of genius or parts, yet learn, my child, to be contented with a mediocrity of acquirements. You may still be respectable in your conduct, and enjoy a tranquil obscurity, with more friends and fewer enemies than you might otherwise have had.

There is one almost certain drawback on a course of scholastic study, that it unfits men for active life. The *ideal* is always at variance with the *practical*. The habit of fixing the attention on the imaginary and abstracted deprives the mind equally of energy and fortitude. By indulging our imaginations on fictions and chimeras, where we have it all our own way and are led on only by the pleasure of the prospect, we grow fastidious, effeminate, lapped in idle luxury, impatient of contradiction, and unable to sustain the shock of real adversity, when it comes; as by being taken up with abstract reasoning or remote events in which we are merely passive spectators, we have no resources to provide against it, no readiness, or expedients for the occasion, or spirit to use them, even if they occur. We must think again before we determine, and thus the opportunity for action is lost. While we are considering the very best possible mode of gaining an object, we find that it has slipped through our fingers, or that others have laid rude, fearless hands upon it. The youthful tyro reluctantly discovers that the ways of the world are not his ways, nor their thoughts his thoughts. Perhaps the old monastic institutions were not in this respect unwise, which carried on to the end of life the secluded habits and romantic associations with which it began, and which created a privileged world for the inhabitants, distinct from the common world of men and women. You will bring with you from your books and solitary reveries a wrong measure of men and things, unless you correct it by careful experience and mixed observation. You will raise your standard of character as much too high at first as from disappointed expectation it will sink too low afterwards. The best qualifier of this theoretical *mania* and of the dreams of poets and moralists (who both treat of things as *they ought to be* and not as *they are*) is in one sense to be found in some of our own popular writers, such as our Novelists and periodical Essayists. But you had, after all, better wait and see what things are than try to anticipate the results. You know more of a road by having travelled it than by all the conjectures and descriptions in the world. You will find the business of life conducted on a much more varied and individual scale than you would expect. People will be concerned about a thousand things that you have no idea of, and will be utterly indifferent to what you feel the greatest interest in. You will find good and evil, folly and discretion, more mingled, and the shades of character running more into each other than they do in the ethical charts. No one is equally wise or guarded at all points, and it is seldom that any one is quite a fool. Do not be surprised, when you go out into the

world, to find men talk exceedingly well on different subjects who do not derive their information immediately from books. In the first place, the light of books is diffused very much abroad in the world in conversation and at second hand; and besides, common-sense is not a monopoly, and experience and observation are sources of information open to the man of the world as well as to the retired student. If you know more of the outline and principles, he knows more of the details and "*practique* part of life." A man may discuss the adventures of a campaign in which he was engaged very agreeably without having read the "Retreat of the Ten Thousand," or give a singular account of the method of drying teas in China without being a profound chemist. It is the vice of scholars to suppose that there is no knowledge in the world but that of books. Do you avoid it, I conjure you; and thereby save yourself the pain and mortification that must ensue from finding out your mistake continually!

Gravity is one great ingredient in the conduct of life, and perhaps a certain share of it is hardly to be dispensed with. Few people can afford to be quite unaffected. At any rate, do not put your worst qualities foremost. Do not seek to distinguish yourself by being ridiculous, nor entertain that miserable ambition to be the sport and butt of the company. By aiming at a certain standard of behaviour or intellect, you will at least show your taste and value for what is excellent. There are those who *blurt* out their good things with so little heed of what they are about that no one thinks anything of them; as others by keeping their folly to themselves gain the reputation of wisdom. Do not, however, affect to speak only in oracles or to deal in *bon-mots*; condescend to the level of the company, and be free and accessible to all persons. Express whatever occurs to you, that cannot offend others or hurt yourself. Keep some opinions to yourself. Say what you please of others, but never repeat what you hear said of them to themselves. If you have nothing better to offer, laugh with the witty, assent to the wise; they will not think the worse of you for it. Listen to information on subjects you are unacquainted with, instead of always striving to lead the conversation to some favourite one of your own. By the last method you will shine, but will not improve. I am ashamed myself ever to open my lips on any question I have ever written upon. It is much more difficult to be able to converse on an equality with a number of persons in turn than to soar above their heads, and excite the stupid gaze of all companies by bestriding some senseless topic of your own and confounding the understandings of those who are ignorant of it. Be not too fond of argument. In-

deed, by going much into company (which I do not, however, wish you to do) you will be weaned from this practice, if you set out with it. Rather suggest what remarks may have occurred to you on a subject than aim at dictating your opinions to others or at defending yourself at all points. You will learn more by agreeing in the main with others and entering into their trains of thinking, than by contradicting and urging them to extremities. Avoid singularity of opinion as well as of everything else. Sound conclusions come with practical knowledge, rather than with speculative refinements; in what we really understand, we reason but little. Long-winded disputes fill up the place of common-sense and candid inquiry. Do not imagine that you will make people friends by showing your superiority over them; it is what they will neither admit nor forgive, unless you have a high and acknowledged reputation beforehand, which renders this sort of petty vanity more inexcusable. Seek to gain the goodwill of others, rather than to extort their applause; and to this end be neither too tenacious of your own claims nor inclined to press too hard on their weaknesses.

Do not affect the society of your inferiors in rank, nor court that of the great. There can be no real sympathy in either case. The first will consider you as a restraint upon them, and the last as an intruder or *upon sufferance*. It is not a desirable distinction to be admitted into company as a man of talents. You are a mark for invidious observation. If you say nothing or merely behave with common propriety and simplicity, you seem to have no business there. If you make a studied display of yourself, it is arrogating a consequence you have no right to. If you are contented to pass as an indifferent person, they despise you; if you distinguish yourself, and show more knowledge, wit, or taste than they do, they hate you for it. You have no alternative. I would rather be asked out to sing than to talk. Every one does not pretend to a fine voice, but every one fancies he has as much understanding as another. Indeed, the secret of this sort of intercourse has been pretty well found out. Literary men are seldom invited to the tables of the great; they send for players and musicians, as they keep monkeys and parrots!

I would not, however, have you run away with a notion that the rich are knaves or that lords are fools. They are, for what I know, as honest and as wise as other people. But it is a trick of our self-love, supposing that another has the decided advantage of us in one way, to strike a balance by taking it for granted (as a moral antithesis) that he must be as much beneath us in those qualities on which we plume ourselves, and which we would appropriate

almost entirely to our own use. It is hard indeed if others are raised above us not only by the gifts of fortune, but of understanding too. It is not to be credited. People have an unwillingness to admit that the House of Lords can be equal in talent to the House of Commons. So in the other sex, if a woman is handsome, she is an idiot or no better than she should be; in ours, if a man is worth a million of money, he is a miser, a fellow that cannot spell his own name, or a poor creature in some way, to bring him to our level This is malice, and not truth. Believe all the good you can of every one. Do not measure others by yourself. If they have advantages which you have not, let your liberality keep pace with their good fortune. Envy no one, and you need envy no one. If you have but the magnanimity to allow merit wherever you see it—understanding in a lord or wit in a cobbler—this temper of mind will stand you instead of many accomplishments. Think no man too happy. Raphael died young: Milton had the misfortune to be blind. If any one is vain or proud, it is from folly or ignorance. Those who pique themselves excessively on some one thing have but that one thing to pique themselves upon, as languages, mechanics, &c. I do not say that this is not an enviable delusion where it is not liable to be disturbed; but at present knowledge is too much diffused and pretensions come too much into collision for this to be long the case; and it is better not to form such a prejudice at first than to have it to undo all the rest of one's life. If you learn any two things, though they may put you out of conceit one with the other, they will effectually cure you of any conceit you might have of yourself, by showing the variety and scope there is in the human mind beyond the limits you had set to it.

You were convinced the first day that you could not learn Latin, which now you find easy. Be taught from this, not to think other obstacles insurmountable that you may meet with in the course of your life, though they seem so at first sight.

Attend above all things to your health; or rather, do nothing wilfully to impair it. Use exercise, abstinence, and regular hours. Drink water when you are alone, and wine or very little spirits in company. It is the last that are ruinous by leading to unlimited excess. There is not the same headlong *impetus* in wine. But one glass of brandy and water makes you want another, that other makes you want a third, and so on, in an increased proportion. Therefore no one can stop midway who does not possess the resolution to abstain altogether; for the inclination is sharpened with its indulgence Never gamble. Or if you play for anything, never do so for what will give you uneasiness the next day. Be not precise in these

matters; but do not pass certain limits, which it is difficult to recover. Do nothing in the irritation of the moment, but take time to reflect. Because you have done one foolish thing, do not do another; nor throw away your health or reputation or comfort to thwart impertinent advice. Avoid a spirit of contradiction, both in words and actions. Do not aim at what is beyond your reach, but at what is within it. Indulge in calm and pleasing pursuits, rather than violent excitements; and learn to conquer your own will, instead of striving to obtain the mastery of that of others.

With respect to your friends, I would wish you to choose them neither from caprice nor accident, and to adhere to them as long as you can. Do not take a surfeit of friendship, through over-sanguine enthusiasm, nor expect it to last for ever. Always speak well of those with whom you have once been intimate, or take some part of the censure you bestow on them to yourself. Never quarrel with tried friends, or those whom you wish to continue such. Wounds of this kind are sure to open again. When once the prejudice is removed that sheaths defects, familiarity only causes jealousy and distrust. Do not keep on with a mockery of friendship after the substance is gone—but part, while you can part friends. Bury the carcass of friendship: it is not worth embalming.

As to the books you will have to read by choice or for amusement, the best are the commonest. The names of many of them are already familiar to you. Read them as you grow up with all the satisfaction in your power, and make much of them. It is perhaps the greatest pleasure you will have in life, the one you will think of longest, and repent of least. If my life had been more full of calamity than it has been (much more than I hope yours will be), I would live it over again, my poor little boy, to have read the books I did in my youth.

In politics I wish you to be an honest man, but no brawler. Hate injustice and falsehood for your own sake. Be neither a martyr nor a sycophant. Wish well to the world without expecting to see it much better than it is; and do not gratify the enemies of liberty by putting yourself at their mercy, if it can be avoided with honour. . . .

There is but one other point on which I meant to speak to you, and that is, the choice of a profession. This, probably, had better be left to time or accident or your own inclination. You have a very fine ear, but I have somehow a prejudice against men-singers, and indeed against the stage altogether. It is an uncertain and ungrateful soil. All professions are bad that depend on reputation, which is "as often got without merit as lost without deserving." Yet I

cannot easily reconcile myself to your being a slave to business, and I shall hardly be able to leave you an independence. A situation in a public office is secure, but laborious and mechanical, and without the two great springs of life, Hope and Fear. Perhaps, however, it might ensure you a competence, and leave you leisure for some other favourite amusement or pursuit. I have said all reputation is hazardous, hard to win, harder to keep. Many never attain a glimpse of what they have all their lives been looking for, and others survive a passing shadow of it. Yet if I were to name one pursuit rather than another, I should wish you to be a good painter, if such a thing could be hoped. I have failed in this myself, and should wish you to be able to do what I have not—to paint like Claude or Rembrandt or Guido or Vandyke, if it were possible. Artists, I think, who have succeeded in their chief object, live to be old, and are agreeable old men. Their minds keep alive to the last. Cosway's spirits never flagged till after ninety, and Nollekens, though blind, passed all his mornings in giving directions about some group or bust in his workshop. You have seen Mr. Northcote, that delightful specimen of the last age. With what avidity he takes up his pencil, or lays it down again to talk of numberless things! His eye has not lost its lustre, nor "paled its ineffectual fire." His body is a shadow: he himself is a pure spirit. There is a kind of immortality about this sort of ideal and visionary existence that dallies with Fate and baffles the grim monster, Death. If I thought you could make as clever an artist and arrive at such an agreeable old age as Mr. Northcote, I should declare at once for your devoting yourself to this enchanting profession; and in that reliance should feel less regret at some of my own disappointments, and little anxiety on your account!

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[*The Plain Speaker. Opinions on Books, Men, and Things.* 2 vols., 1826. Second Edition, 1851. Third Edition, 1873.]

BURKE'S STYLE.

[From the Essay "On the Prose-Style of Poets."]

It has always appeared to me that the most perfect prose-style, the most powerful, the most dazzling, the most daring, that which went the nearest to the verge of poetry, and yet never fell over, was Burke's. It has the solidity and sparkling effect of the

diamond: all other *fine writing* is like French paste or Bristol-stones in the comparison. Burke's style is airy, flighty, adventurous, but it never loses sight of the subject; nay, is always in contact with and derives its increased or varying impulse from it. It may be said to pass yawning gulfs "on the unsteadfast footing of a spear:" still it has an actual resting-place and tangible support under it—it is not suspended on nothing. It differs from poetry, as I conceive, like the chamois from the eagle: it climbs to an almost equal height, touches upon a cloud, overlooks a precipice, is picturesque, sublime — but all the while, instead of soaring through the air, it stands upon a rocky cliff, clambers up by abrupt and intricate ways, and browses on the roughest bark or crops the tender flower. The principle which guides his pen is truth, not beauty—not pleasure, but power. He has no choice, no selection of subject to flatter the reader's idle taste or assist his own fancy: he must take what comes, and make the most of it. He works the most striking effects out of the most unpromising materials, by the mere activity of his mind. He rises with the lofty, descends with the mean, luxuriates in beauty, gloats over deformity. It is all the same to him, so that he loses no particle of the exact, characteristic, extreme impression of the thing he writes about, and that he communicates this to the reader, after exhausting every possible mode of illustration, plain or abstracted, figurative or literal. Whatever stamps the original image more distinctly on the mind is welcome. The nature of his task precludes continual beauty; but it does not preclude continual ingenuity, force, originality. He had to treat of political questions, mixed modes, abstract ideas, and his fancy (or poetry, if you will) was ingrafted on these artificially, and, as it might sometimes be thought, violently, instead of growing naturally out of them, as it would spring of its own accord from individual objects and feelings. . . . What can be more remote, for instance, and at the same time more apposite, more *the same*, than the following comparison of the English Constitution to "the proud Keep of Windsor," in the celebrated Letter to a noble Lord?

"Such are *their* ideas; such *their* religion, and such *their* law. But as to *our* country and *our* race, as long as the well-compacted structure of our Church and State, the sanctuary, the holy of holies of that ancient law, defended by reverence, defended by power—a fortress at once and a temple—shall stand inviolate on the brow of the British Sion; as long as the British Monarchy—not more limited than fenced by the orders of the State—shall, like the proud Keep of Windsor, rising in the majesty of proportion, and girt with the double belt of its kindred and coeval towers; as long as this

awful structure shall oversee and guard the subjected land, so long the mounds and dykes of the low, fat, Bedford level will have nothing to fear from all the pickaxes of all the levellers of France. As long as our Sovereign Lord the King, and his faithful subjects, the Lords and Commons of this realm—the triple cord which no man can break; the solemn, sworn, constitutional frank-pledge of this nation; the firm guarantees of each other's being and each other's rights; the joint and several securities, each in its place and order, for every kind and every quality of property and of dignity—as long as these endure, so long the Duke of Bedford is safe: and we are all safe together—the high, from the blights of envy and the spoliations of rapacity; the low, from the iron hand of oppression and the insolent spurn of contempt. Amen! and so be it: and so it will be,

> 'Dum domus Æneæ Capitoli immobile saxum
> Accolet; imperiumque pater Romanus habebit.'"

Nothing can well be more impracticable to a simile than the vague and complicated idea which is here embodied in one; yet how finely, how nobly it stands out, in natural grandeur, in royal state, with double barriers round it to answer for its identity, with "buttress, frieze, and coigne of 'vantage" for the imagination to "make its pendant bed and procreant cradle," till the idea is confounded with the object representing it—the wonder of a kingdom; and then how striking, how determined the descent, "at one fell swoop," to the "low, fat, Bedford level!" Poetry would have been bound to maintain a certain decorum, a regular balance between these two ideas; sterling prose throws aside all such idle respect to appearances, and with its pen, like a sword, "sharp and sweet," lays open the naked truth! The poet's Muse is like a mistress, whom we keep only while she is young and beautiful, *durante bene placito;* the Muse of prose is like a wife, whom we take during life, *for better, for worse.* Burke's execution, like that of all good prose, savours of the texture of what he describes, and his pen slides or drags over the ground of his subject, like the painter's pencil. The most rigid fidelity and the most fanciful extravagance meet and are reconciled in his pages. I never pass Windsor but I think of this passage in Burke, and hardly know to which I am indebted most for enriching my moral sense, that or the fine picturesque stanza in Gray:

> "From Windsor's heights the expanse below
> Of mead, of lawn, of wood survey," &c.

COLERIDGE'S STYLE.

I AM indebted to Mr. Coleridge for the comparison of poetic prose to the second-hand finery of a lady's-maid (just made use of). He himself is an instance of his own observation, and (what is even worse) of the opposite fault—an affectation of quaintness and originality. With bits of tarnished lace and worthless frippery, he assumes a sweeping oriental costume, or borrows the stiff dresses of our ancestors, or starts an eccentric fashion of his own. He is swelling and turgid—everlastingly aiming to be greater than his subject; filling his fancy with fumes and vapours in the pangs and throes of miraculous parturition, and bringing forth only *still births*. He has an incessant craving, as it were, to exalt every idea into a metaphor, to expand every sentiment into a lengthened mystery, voluminous and vast, confused and cloudy. His style is not succinct, but encumbered with a train of words and images that have no practical, and only a possible, relation to one another—that add to its stateliness, but impede its march. One of his sentences winds its "forlorn way obscure" over the page like a patriarchal procession with camels laden, wreathed turbans, household wealth, the whole riches of the author's mind poured out upon the barren waste of his subject. The palm-tree spreads its sterile branches overhead, and the land of promise is seen in the distance. All this is owing to his wishing to overdo everything—to make something more out of everything than it is, or than it is worth. The simple truth does not satisfy him—no direct proposition fills up the moulds of his understanding. All is foreign, far-fetched, irrelevant, laboured, unproductive. To read one of his disquisitions is like hearing the variations to a piece of music without the score. Or, to vary the simile, he is not like a man going a journey by the stage-coach along the highroad, but is always getting into a balloon and mounting into the air, above the plain ground of prose. Whether he soars to the empyrean or dives to the centre (as he sometimes does), it is equally to get away from the question before him, and to prove that he owes everything to his own mind. His object is to invent; he scorns to imitate. The business of prose is the contrary. But Mr. Coleridge is a poet, and his thoughts are free.

LEIGH HUNT'S STYLE.

To my taste, the author of "Rimini" and Editor of the *Examiner* is among the best and least corrupted of our poetical prose-writers. In his light but well-supported columns we find the raciness, the

sharpness, and sparkling effect of poetry, with little that is extravagant or far-fetched, and no turgidity or pompous pretension. Perhaps there is too much the appearance of relaxation and trifling (as if he had escaped the shackles of rhyme), a caprice, a levity, and a disposition to innovate in words and ideas. Still, the genuine master-spirit of the prose-writer is there; the tone of lively, sensible conversation; and this may in part arise from the author's being himself an animated talker. Mr. Hunt wants something of the heat and earnestness of the political partisan; but his familiar and miscellaneous papers have all the ease, grace, and point of the best style of Essay-writing. Many of his effusions in the *Indicator* show that if he had devoted himself exclusively to that mode of writing, he inherits more of the spirit of Steele than any man since his time.

Not to spin out this discussion too much, I would conclude by observing, that some of the old English prose-writers (who were not poets) are the best, and, at the same time, the most *poetical* in the favourable sense. Among these we may reckon some of the old divines, and Jeremy Taylor at the head of them. There is a flush like the dawn over his writings; the sweetness of the rose, the freshness of the morning dew. There is a softness in his style, proceeding from the tenderness of his heart: but his head is firm, and his hand is free. His materials are as finely wrought up as they are original and attractive in themselves. Milton's prose-style savours too much of poetry, and, as I have already hinted, of an imitation of the Latin. Dryden's is perfectly unexceptionable, and a model, in simplicity, strength, and perspicuity, for the subjects he treated of.

THE CONVERSATION OF AUTHORS.

. . . Books are a world in themselves, it is true; but they are not the only world. The world itself is a volume larger than all the libraries in it. Learning is a sacred deposit from the experience of ages; but it has not put all future experience on the shelf, or debarred the common herd of mankind from the use of their hands, tongues, eyes, ears, or understandings. Taste is a luxury for the privileged few; but it would be hard upon those who have not the same standard of refinement in their own minds that we suppose ourselves to have, if this should prevent them from having recourse, as usual, to their old frolics, coarse jokes, and horse-play, and getting through the wear and tear of the world, with such homely sayings and

shrewd helps as they may. Happy is it, that the mass of mankind eat and drink, and sleep, and perform their several tasks, and do as they like without us—caring nothing for our scribblings, our carpings, and our quibbles; and moving on the same, in spite of our fine-spun distinctions, fantastic theories, and lines of demarcation, which are like chalk-figures drawn on ballroom floors to be danced out before morning! In the field opposite the window where I write this there is a country-girl picking stones: in the one next it there are several poor women weeding the blue and red flowers from the corn: farther on, are two boys tending a flock of sheep. What do they know or care about what I am writing about them, or ever will?—or what would they be the better for it, if they did? Or why need we despise

> "The wretched slave,
> Who like a lackey, from the rise to the set,
> Sweats in the eye of Phœbus, and all night
> Sleeps in Elysium; next day, after dawn,
> Doth rise, and help Hyperion to his horse;
> And follows so the ever-running year
> With profitable labour to his grave?"

Is not this life as sweet as writing Ephemerides? But we put that which flutters the brain idly for a moment, and then is heard no more, in competition with nature, which exists everywhere, and lasts always. We not only underrate the force of nature, and make too much of art, but we also overrate our own accomplishments and advantages derived from art. In the presence of clownish ignorance, or of persons without any great pretensions, real or affected, we are very much inclined to look upon ourselves as the virtual representatives of science, art, and literature. We have a strong itch to show off and do the honours of civilisation for all the great men whose works we have ever read, and whose names our auditors have never heard of, as noblemen's lackeys, in the absence of their masters, give themselves airs of superiority over every one else. But though we have read Congreve, a stage-coachman may be an overmatch for us in wit: though we are deep-versed in the excellence of Shakspeare's colloquial style, a village beldam may outscold us: though we have read Machiavel in the original Italian, we may be easily outwitted by a clown: and though we have cried our eyes out over the "New Eloise," a poor shepherd lad, who hardly knows how to spell his own name, may "tell his tale, under the thawthorn in the dale," and prove a more thriving wooer. What, then is the advantage we possess over the meanest of the mean? Why, this, that we have read Congreve, Shakspeare, Machiavel, the "New

Eloise;"—not that we are to have their wit, genius, shrewdness, or melting tenderness. . . .

Argument, again, is the death of conversation, if carried on in a spirit of hostility: but discussion is a pleasant and profitable thing, where you advance and defend your opinions as far as you can, and admit the truth of what is objected against them with equal impartiality: in short, where you do not pretend to set up for an oracle, but freely declare what you really know about any question, or suggest what has struck you as throwing a new light upon it, and let it pass for what it is worth. This tone of conversation was well described by Dr. Johnson, when he said of some party at which he had been present the night before, "We had a good talk, sir!" As a general rule, there is no conversation worth anything but between friends, or those who agree in the same leading views of a subject. Nothing was ever learnt by either side in a dispute. You contradict one another, will not allow a grain of sense in what your adversary advances, are blind to whatever makes against yourself, dare not look the question fairly in the face, so that you cannot avail yourself even of your real advantages, insist most on what you feel to be the weakest points of your argument, and get more and more absurd, dogmatical, and violent every moment. . . .

This litigious humour is bad enough: but there is one character still worse—that of a person who goes into company, not to contradict, but to *talk at* you. This is the greatest nuisance in civilised society. Such a person does not come armed to defend himself at all points, but to unsettle, if he can, and throw a slur on all your favourite opinions. If he has a notion that any one in the room is fond of poetry, he immediately volunteers a contemptuous tirade against the idle jingle of verse. If he suspects you have a delight in pictures, he endeavours, not by fair argument, but by a side-wind, to put you out of conceit with so frivolous an art. If you have a taste for music, he does not think much good is to be done by this tickling of the ears. If you speak in praise of a comedy, he does not see the use of wit: if you say you have been to a tragedy, he shakes his head at this mockery of human misery, and thinks it ought to be prohibited. He tries to find out beforehand whatever it is that you take a particular pride or pleasure in, that he may annoy your self-love in the tenderest point (as if he were probing a wound) and make you dissatisfied with yourself and your pursuits for several days afterwards. A person might as well make a practice of throwing out scandalous aspersions against your dearest friends or nearest relations, by way of ingratiating himself into your favour. Such ill-timed imperti-

nence is "villainous, and shows a pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it."

The soul of conversation is sympathy.—Authors should converse chiefly with authors, and their talk should be of books. "When Greek meets Greek, then comes the tug of war." There is nothing so pedantic as pretending not to be pedantic. No man can get above his pursuit in life: it is getting above himself, which is impossible. There is a freemasonry in all things. You can only speak to be understood, but this you cannot be, except by those who are in the secret. Hence an argument has been drawn to supersede the necessity of conversation altogether; for it has been said, that there is no use in talking to people of sense, who know all that you can tell them, nor to fools, who will not be instructed. There is, however, the smallest encouragement to proceed, when you are conscious that the more you really enter into a subject, the farther you will be from the comprehension of your hearers; and that the more proofs you give of any position, the more odd and out-of-the-way they will think your notions. Coleridge is the only person who can talk to all sorts of people, on all sorts of subjects, without caring a farthing for their understanding one word he says—and *he* talks only for admiration and to be listened to, and accordingly the least interruption puts him out. I firmly believe he would make just the same impression on half his audiences, if he purposely repeated absolute nonsense with the same voice and manner and inexhaustible flow of undulating speech! In general, wit shines only by reflection. You must take your cue from your company —must rise as they rise, and sink as they fall. You must see that your good things, your knowing allusions, are not flung away, like the pearls in the adage. What a check it is to be asked a foolish question; to find that the first principles are not understood! You are thrown on your back immediately, the conversation is stopped like a country-dance by those who do not know the figure. But when a set of adepts, of *illuminati*, get about a question, it is worth while to hear them talk. They may snarl and quarrel over it, like dogs; but they pick it bare to the bone, they masticate it thoroughly.

CHARLES LAMB'S EVENINGS.

This was the case formerly at Lamb's, where we used to have many lively skirmishes at their Thursday evening parties. I doubt whether the Small-coal man's musical parties could exceed them. Oh! for

the pen of John Buncle to consecrate a *petit souvenir* to their memory!—There was Lamb himself, the most delightful, the most provoking, the most witty and sensible of men. He always made the best pun, and the best remark in the course of the evening. His serious conversation, like his serious writing, is his best. No one ever stammered out such fine piquant, deep, eloquent things in half a dozen half-sentences as he does. His jests scald like tears: and he probes a question with a play upon words. What a keen, laughing, hare-brained vein of home-felt truth! What choice venom! How often did we cut into the haunch of letters, while we discussed the haunch of mutton on the table! How we skimmed the cream of criticism! How we got into the heart of controversy! How we picked out the marrow of authors! "And, in our flowing cups, many a good name and true was freshly remembered." Recollect (most sage and critical reader) that in all this I was but a guest! Need I go over the names? They were but the old everlasting set —Milton and Shakspeare, Pope and Dryden, Steele and Addison, Swift and Gay, Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, Richardson, Hogarth's prints, Claude's landscapes, the Cartoons at Hampton Court, and all those things that, having once been, must ever be. The Scotch Novels had not then been heard of: so we said nothing about them. In general, we were hard upon the moderns. The author of the "Rambler" was only tolerated in Boswell's "Life" of him; and it was as much as any one could do to edge in a word for "Junius." Lamb could not bear "Gil Blas." This was a fault. I remember the greatest triumph I ever had was in persuading him, after some years' difficulty, that Fielding was better than Smollett. On one occasion he was for making out a list of persons famous in history that one would wish to see again—at the head of whom were Pontius Pilate, Sir Thomas Browne, and Dr. Faustus—but we blackballed most of his list! But with what a gusto would he describe his favourite authors, Donne or Sir Philip Sidney, and call their most crabbed passages *delicious!* He tried them on his palate as epicures taste olives, and his observations had a smack in them, like a roughness on the tongue. With what discrimination he hinted a defect in what he admired most!—as in saying that the display of the sumptuous banquet in "Paradise Regained" was not in true keeping, as the simplest fare was all that was necessary to tempt the extremity of hunger—and stating that Adam and Eve in "Paradise Lost" were too much like married people. He has furnished many a text for Coleridge to preach upon. There was no fuss or cant about him: nor were his sweets or his sours ever diluted with one particle of affectation. I cannot say that the party at Lamb's were all of one de-

scription. There were honorary members, lay-brothers. Wit and good-fellowship was the motto inscribed over the door. When a stranger came in, it was not asked, "Has he written anything?"—we were above that pedantry; but we waited to see what he could do. If he could take a hand at piquet, he was welcome to sit down. If a person liked anything, if he took snuff heartily, it was sufficient. He would understand, by analogy, the pungency of other things besides Irish blackguard or Scotch rappee. A character was good anywhere, in a room or on paper. But we abhorred insipidity, affectation, and fine gentlemen. There was one of our party who never failed to mark "two for his Nob" at cribbage, and he was thought no mean person. This was Ned Phillips, and a better fellow in his way breathes not. There was ——, who asserted some incredible matter of fact as a likely paradox, and settled all controversies by an *ipse dixit*, a *fiat* of his will, hammering out many a hard theory on the anvil of his brain—the Baron Munchausen of politics and practical philosophy:—there was Captain Burney, who had you at an advantage by never understanding you:—there was Jem White, the author of "Falstaff's Letters," who the other day left this dull world to go in search of more kindred spirits, "turning like the latter end of a lover's lute:"—there was Ayrton, who sometimes dropped in, the Will Honeycomb of our set—and Mrs. Reynolds, who, being of a quiet turn, loved to hear a noisy debate. An utterly uninformed person might have supposed this a scene of vulgar confusion and uproar. While the most critical question was pending, while the most difficult problem in philosophy was solving, Phillips cried out, "That's game," and Martin Burney muttered a quotation over the last remains of a veal-pie at a side-table. Once, and once only, the literary interest overcame the general. For Coleridge was riding the high German horse, and demonstrating the Categories of the Transcendental Philosophy to the author of the "Road to Ruin;" who insisted on his knowledge of German, and German metaphysics, having read the "Critique of Pure Reason" in the original. "My dear Mr. Holcroft," said Coleridge, in a tone of infinitely provoking conciliation, "you really put me in mind of a sweet, pretty German girl, about fifteen, that I met with in the Hartz forest in Germany—and who one day, as I was reading the "Limits of the Knowable and the Unknowable," the profoundest of all his works, with great attention, came behind my chair, and leaning over, said, 'What! *you* read Kant? Why, *I*, that am a German born, don't understand him!'" This was too much to bear, and Holcroft, starting up, called out in no measured tone, "Mr. Coleridge, you are the most eloquent man I ever met with, and the most

troublesome with your eloquence!" Phillips held the cribbage-peg, that was to mark him game, suspended in his hand; and the whist-table was silent for a moment. I saw Holcroft downstairs, and on coming to the landing-place at Mitre Court, he stopped me to observe, that "he thought Mr. Coleridge a very clever man, with a great command of language, but that he feared he did not always affix very precise ideas to the words he used." After he was gone we had our laugh out, and went on with the argument on the nature of Reason, the Imagination, and the Will. I wish I could find a publisher for it; it would make a supplement to the "Biographia Literaria," in a volume and a half octavo.

Those days are over! An event, the name of which I wish never to mention, broke up our party, like a bombshell thrown into the room; and now we seldom meet:

"Like angels' visits, short and far between."

There is no longer the same set of persons, nor of associations. Lamb does not live where he did. By shifting his abode, his notions seem less fixed. He does not wear his old snuff-coloured coat and breeches. It looks like an alteration in his style. An author and a wit should have a separate costume, a particular cloth; he should present something positive and singular to the mind, like Mr. Douce of the Museum. Our faith in the religion of letters will not bear to be taken to pieces, and put together again by caprice or accident. Leigh Hunt goes there sometimes. He has a fine vinous spirit about him, and tropical blood in his veins; but he is better at his own table. He has a great flow of pleasantry and delightful animal spirits; but his hits do not tell like Lamb's; you cannot repeat them the next day. He requires not only to be appreciated, but to have a select circle of admirers and devotees, to feel himself quite at home. He sits at the head of a party with great gaiety and grace; has an elegant manner and turn of features; is never at a loss—*aliquando sufflaminandus erat*—has continual sportive sallies of wit or fancy; tells a story capitally; mimics an actor or an acquaintance to admiration; laughs with great glee and good-humour at his own or other people's jokes; understands the point of an equivoque or an observation immediately; has a taste and knowledge of books, of music, of medals; manages an argument adroitly; is genteel and gallant, and has a set of by-phrases and quaint allusions always at hand to produce a laugh:—if he has a fault, it is that he does not listen so well as he speaks, is impatient of interruption, and is fond of being looked up to, without considering by whom. I believe, how-

ever, he has pretty well seen the folly of this. Neither is his ready display of personal accomplishment and variety of resources an advantage to his writings. They sometimes present a desultory and slipshod appearance, owing to this very circumstance. The same things that tell, perhaps, best to a private circle round the fireside are not always intelligible to the public, nor does he take pains to make them so. He is too confident and secure of his audience. That which may be entertaining enough with the assistance of a certain liveliness of manner may read very flat on paper, because it is abstracted from all the circumstances that had set it off to advantage. A writer should recollect that he has only to trust to the immediate impression of words, like a musician who sings without the accompaniment of an instrument. There is nothing to help out, or slubber over, the defects of the voice in the one case, nor of the style in the other. The reader may, if he pleases, get a very good idea of Leigh Hunt's conversation from a very agreeable paper he has lately published, called the *Indicator*, than which nothing can be more happily conceived or executed.

The art of conversation is the art of hearing as well as of being heard. Authors in general are not good listeners. Some of the best talkers are, on this account, the worst company; and some who are very indifferent, but very great talkers, are as bad. It is sometimes wonderful to see how a person who has been entertaining or tiring a company by the hour together drops his countenance as if he had been shot, or had been seized with a sudden lockjaw, the moment any one interposes a single observation. The best converser I know is, however, the best listener. I mean Mr. Northcote, the painter. Painters by their profession are not bound to shine in conversation. and they shine the more. He lends his ear to an observation as if you had brought him a piece of news, and enters into it with as much avidity and earnestness as if it interested himself personally. If he repeats an old remark or story, it is with the same freshness and point as for the first time. It always arises out of the occasion, and has the stamp of originality. There is no parroting of himself. His look is a continual, ever-varying history-piece of what passes in his mind. His face is a book. There need no marks of interjection or interrogation to what he says. His manner is quite picturesque. There is an excess of character and *naïveté* that never tires. His thoughts bubble up and sparkle like beads on old wine. The fund of anecdote, the collection of curious particulars, is enough to set up any common retailer of jests that dines out every day; but these are not strung together like a row of galley-slaves, but are always introduced to illustrate some argument or bring out some fine

distinction of character. The mixture of spleen adds to the sharpness of the point, like poisoned arrows. Mr. Northcote enlarges with enthusiasm on the old painters, and tells good things of the new. The only thing he ever vexed me in was his liking the "Catalogue Raisonnée." I had almost as soon hear him talk of Titian's pictures (which he does with tears in his eyes, and looking just like them) as see the originals, and I had rather hear him talk of Sir Joshua's than see them. He is the last of that school who knew Goldsmith and Johnson. How finely he describes Pope! His elegance of mind, his figure, his character, were not unlike his own. He does not resemble a modern Englishman, but puts one in mind of a Roman cardinal or a Spanish inquisitor. I never ate or drank with Mr. Northcote; but I have lived on his conversation with undiminished relish ever since I can remember,—and when I leave it, I come out into the street with feelings lighter and more ethereal than I have at any other time. . . .

There is a character of a gentleman; so there is a character of a scholar, which is no less easily recognised. The one has an air of books about him, as the other has of good-breeding. The one wears his thoughts as the other does his clothes, gracefully; and even if they are a little old-fashioned, they are not ridiculous: they have had their day. The gentleman shows, by his manner, that he has been used to respect from others: the scholar, that he lays claim to self-respect and to a certain independence of opinion. The one has been accustomed to the best company; the other has passed his time in cultivating an intimacy with the best authors. There is nothing forward or vulgar in the behaviour of the one; nothing shrewd or petulant in the observations of the other, as if he should astonish the bystanders, or was astonished himself at his own discoveries. Good taste and good sense, like common politeness, are, or are supposed to be, matters of course. One is distinguished by an appearance of marked attention to every one present; the other manifests an habitual air of abstraction and absence of mind. The one is not an upstart, with all the self-important airs of the founder of his own fortune; nor the other a self-taught man, with the repulsive self-sufficiency which arises from an ignorance of what hundreds have known before him. We must excuse, perhaps, a little conscious family pride in the one, and a little harmless pedantry in the other. As there is a class of the first character which sinks into the mere gentleman—that is, which has nothing but this sense of respectability and propriety to support it—so the character of a scholar not infrequently dwindles down into the shadow of a shade, till nothing is left of it but the mere bookworm. There is often something

amiable as well as enviable in this last character. I know one such instance, at least. The person I mean has an admiration for learning, if he is only dazzled by its light. He lives among old authors, if he does not enter much into their spirit. He handles the covers, and turns over the page, and is familiar with the names and dates. He is busy and self-involved. He hangs like a film and cobweb upon letters, or is like the dust upon the outside of knowledge, which should not be rudely brushed aside. He follows learning as its shadow; but as such, he is respectable. He browses on the husk and leaves of books, as the young fawn browses on the bark and leaves of trees. Such a one lives all his life in a dream of learning, and has never once had his sleep broken by a real sense of things. He believes implicitly in genius, truth, virtue, liberty, because he finds the names of these things in books. He thinks that love and friendship are the finest things imaginable, both in practice and theory. The legend of good women is to him no fiction. When he steals from the twilight of his cell, the scene breaks upon him like an illuminated missal, and all the people he sees are but so many figures in a *camera obscura*. He reads the world, like a favourite volume, only to find beauties in it, or like an edition of some old work which he is preparing for the press, only to make emendations in it, and correct the errors that have inadvertently slipped in. He and his dog Tray are much the same honest, simple-hearted, faithful, affectionate creatures—if Tray could but read! His mind cannot take the impression of vice; but the gentleness of his nature turns gall to milk. He would not hurt a fly. He draws the picture of mankind from the guileless simplicity of his own heart: and when he dies, his spirit will take its smiling leave, without having ever had an ill thought of others, or the consciousness of one in itself!

APPLICATION TO STUDY.

. . . I THINK there are two mistakes, common enough, on this subject; viz., that men of genius, or of first-rate capacity, do little, except by intermittent fits, or *per saltum*, and that they do that little in a slight and slovenly manner. There may be instances of this; but they are not the highest, and they are the exceptions, not the rule. On the contrary, the greatest artists have in general been the most prolific or the most elaborate, as the best writers have been frequently the most voluminous as well as indefatigable. We have a great living instance among writers, that the quality of a man's productions is not to be estimated in the inverse ratio of

their quantity—I mean in the author of "Waverley," the fecundity of whose pen is no less admirable than its felicity. Shakspeare is another instance of the same prodigality of genius; his materials being endlessly poured forth with no niggard or fastidious hand, and the mastery of the execution being (in many respects at least) equal to the boldness of the design. As one example among others that I might cite of the attention which he gave to his subject, it is sufficient to observe, that there is scarcely a word in any of his more striking passages that can be altered for the better. If any person, for instance, is trying to recollect a favourite line, and cannot hit upon some particular expression, it is in vain to think of substituting any other so good. That in the original text is not merely the best, but it seems the only right one. I will stop to illustrate this point a little. I was at a loss the other day for the line in Henry V.:

> "*Nice* customs curtsey to great kings."

I could not recollect the word *nice:* I tried a number of others, such as *old, grave,* &c.—they would none of them do, but seemed all heavy, lumbering, or from the purpose: the word *nice,* on the contrary, appeared to drop into its place, and be ready to assist in paying the reverence required. Again:

> "A jest's *prosperity* lies in the ear
> Of him that hears it."

I thought, in quoting from memory, of "A jest's *success,*" "A jest's *renown,*" &c. I then turned to the volume, and there found the very word that of all others expressed the idea. Had Shakspeare searched through the four quarters of the globe, he could not have lighted on another to convey so exactly what he meant—a *casual, hollow, sounding* success! I could multiply such examples, but that I am sure the reader will easily supply them himself; and they show sufficiently that Shakspeare was not (as he is often represented) a loose or clumsy writer. The bold, happy texture of his style, in which every word is prominent, and yet cannot be torn from its place without violence, any more than a limb from the body, is (one should think) the result either of vigilant painstaking or of unerring, intuitive perception, and not the mark of crude conceptions and "the random, blindfold blows of Ignorance."

There cannot be a greater contradiction to the common prejudice that "Genius is naturally a truant and a vagabond" than the astonishing and (on this hypothesis) unaccountable number of *chefs-*

d'œuvre left behind them by the old masters. The stream of their invention supplies the taste of successive generations like a river: they furnish a hundred galleries, and preclude competition, not more by the excellence than by the number of their performances. Take Raphael and Rubens alone. There are works of theirs in single collections enough to occupy a long and laborious life, and yet their works are spread through all the collections of Europe. They seem to have cost them no more labour than if they "had drawn in their breath and puffed it forth again." But we know that they made drawings, studies, sketches, of all the principal of these, with the care and caution of the merest tyros in the art; and they remain equal proofs of their capacity and diligence. The cartoons of Raphael alone might have employed many years, and made a life of illustrious labour, though they look as if they had been struck off at a blow, and are not a tenth part of what he produced in his short but bright career. Titian and Michael Angelo lived longer, but they worked as hard and did as well. Shall we bring in competition with examples like these some trashy caricaturist or idle dauber, who has no sense of the infinite resources of nature or art, nor, consequently, any power to employ himself upon them for any length of time or to any purpose, to prove that genius and regular industry are incompatible qualities?

In my opinion, the very superiority of the works of the great painters (instead of being a bar to) accounts for their multiplicity. Power is pleasure; and pleasure sweetens pain. A fine poet thus describes the effect of the sight of nature on his mind:

> —— "The sounding cataract
> Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
> The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
> Their colours and their forms were then to me
> An appetite, a feeling, and a love,
> That had no need of a remoter charm
> By thought supplied, or any interest
> Unborrowed from the eye."

So the forms of nature, or the human form divine, stood before the great artists of old, nor required any other stimulus to lead the eye to survey or the hand to embody them, than the pleasure derived from the inspiration of the subject, and "propulsive force" of the mimic creation. The grandeur of their works was an argument with them, not to stop short, but to proceed. They could have no higher excitement or satisfaction than in the exercise of their art and endless generation of truth and beauty. Success prompts to exertion, and habit facilitates success. It is idle to suppose we can exhaust

nature; and the more we employ our own faculties, the more we strengthen them and enrich our stores of observation and invention. The more we do, the more we *can* do. Not, indeed, if we *get our ideas out of our own heads*—that stock is soon exhausted, and we recur to tiresome, vapid imitations of ourselves. But this is the difference between real and mock talent, between genius and affectation. Nature is not limited, nor does it become effete, like our conceit and vanity. The closer we examine it, the more it refines upon us; it expands as we enlarge and shift our view; it "grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength." The subjects are endless; and our capacity is invigorated as it is called out by occasion and necessity. He who does nothing renders himself incapable of doing anything; but while we are executing any work, we are preparing and qualifying ourselves to undertake another. The principles are the same in all nature; and we understand them better as we verify them by experience and practice. It is not as if there were a given number of subjects to work upon, or a set of *innate* or preconceived ideas in our minds which we encroached upon with every new design; the subjects, as I said before, are endless, and we acquire ideas by imparting them. Our expenditure of intellectual wealth makes us rich: we can only be liberal as we have previously accumulated the means. By lying idle, as by standing still, we are confined to the same trite, narrow round of topics: by continuing our efforts, as by moving forwards in a road, we extend our views, and discover continually new tracts of country. Genius, like humanity, rusts for want of use.

Habit also gives promptness; and the soul of despatch is decision. One man may write a book or paint a picture while another is deliberating about the plan or the title-page. The great painters were able to do so much, because they knew exactly what they meant to do, and how to set about it. They were thoroughbred workmen, and were not learning their art while they were exercising it. One can do a great deal in a short time if one only knows how. Thus an author may become very voluminous who only employs an hour or two in a day in study. If he has once obtained, by habit and reflection, a use of his pen, with plenty of materials to work upon, the pages vanish before him. The time lost is in beginning, or in stopping after we have begun. If we only go forward with spirit and confidence, we shall soon arrive at the end of our journey. A practised writer ought never to hesitate for a sentence from the moment he sets pen to paper, or think about the course he is to take. He must trust to his previous knowledge of the subject and to his immediate impulses, and he will get to the close of his task without accidents or loss of

time. I can easily understand how the old divines and controversialists produced their folios: I could write folios myself, if I rose early and sat up late at this kind of occupation. But I confess I should soon be tired of it, besides wearying the reader.

In one sense, art is long and life is short. In another sense, this aphorism is not true. The best of us are idle half our time. It is wonderful how much is done in a short space, provided we set about it properly, and give our minds wholly to it. Let any one devote himself to any art or science ever so strenuously, and he will still have leisure to make considerable progress in half-a-dozen other acquirements. Leonardo da Vinci was a mathematician, a musician, a poet, and an anatomist, besides being one of the greatest painters of his age. The Prince of Painters was a courtier, a lover, and fond of dress and company. Michael Angelo was a prodigy of versatility of talent—a writer of Sonnets (which Wordsworth has thought worth translating) and the admirer of Dante. Salvator was a lutenist and a satirist. Titian was an elegant letter-writer and a finished gentleman. Sir Joshua Reynolds's "Discourses" are more polished and classical even than any of his pictures. Let a man do all he can in any one branch of study, he must either exhaust himself and doze over it, or vary his pursuit, or else lie idle. All our real labour lies in a nutshell. The mind makes, at some period or other, one herculean effort, and the rest is mechanical. We have to climb a steep and narrow precipice at first; but after that the way is broad and easy, where we may drive several accomplishments abreast. Men should have one principal pursuit, which may be both agreeably and advantageously diversified with other lighter ones, as the subordinate parts of a picture may be managed so as to give effect to the centre group. It has been observed by a sensible man, that the having a regular occupation or professional duties to attend to is no excuse for putting forth an inelegant or inaccurate work; for a habit of industry braces and strengthens the mind, and enables it to wield its energies with additional ease and steadier purpose. Were I allowed to instance in myself, if what I write at present is worth nothing, at least it costs me nothing. But it cost me a great deal twenty years ago. I have added little to my stock since then, and taken little from it. I "unfold the book and volume of the brain," and transcribe the characters I see there as mechanically as any one might copy the letters in a sampler. I do not say they came there mechanically—I transfer them to the paper mechanically. After eight or ten years' hard study, an author (at least) may go to sleep. . . .

THE SPIRIT OF OBLIGATIONS.

. . . I LIKE real good-nature and good-will, better than I do any offers of patronage or plausible rules for my conduct in life. I may suspect the soundness of the last, and I may not be quite sure of the motives of the first. People complain of ingratitude for benefits, and of the neglect of wholesome advice. In the first place, we pay little attention to advice, because we are seldom thought of in it. The person who gives it either contents himself to lay down (*ex cathedrâ*) certain vague, general maxims and "wise saws," which we knew before, or, instead of considering what we *ought to do*, recommends what he himself *would do*. He merely substitutes his own will, caprice, and prejudices for ours, and expects us to be guided by them. Instead of changing places with us (to see what is best to be done in the given circumstances), he insists on our looking at the question from his point of view, and acting in such a manner as to please him. This is not at all reasonable; for *one man's meat*, according to the old adage, *is another man's poison*. And it is not strange, that, starting from such opposite premises, we should seldom jump in a conclusion, and that the art of giving and taking advice is little better than a game at cross-purposes. I have observed that those who are the most inclined to assist others are the least forward or peremptory with their advice; for, having our interest really at heart, they consider what can, rather than what *cannot* be done, and aid our views and endeavour to avert ill-consequences by moderating our impatience and allaying irritations, instead of thwarting our main design, which only tends to make us more extravagant and violent than ever. In the second place, benefits are often conferred out of ostentation or pride, rather than from true regard; and the person obliged is too apt to perceive this. People who are fond of appearing in the light of patrons will perhaps go through fire and water to serve you, who yet would be sorry to find you no longer wanted their assistance, and whose friendship cools and their good-will slackens, as you are relieved by their active zeal from the necessity of being further beholden to it. Compassion and generosity are their favourite virtues; and they countenance you as you afford them opportunities for exercising them. The instant you can go alone, or can stand upon your own ground, you are discarded as unfit for their purpose.

This is something more than mere good-nature or humanity. A thoroughly good-natured man, a real friend, is one who is pleased at

our good-fortune, as well as prompt to seize every occasion of relieving our distress. We apportion our gratitude accordingly. We are thankful for good-will rather than for services, for the motive than the *quantum* of favour received—a kind word or look is never forgotten, while we cancel prouder and weightier obligations; and those who esteem us or evince a partiality to us are those whom we still consider as our best friends. Nay, so strong is this feeling, that we extend it even to those counterfeits in friendship—flatterers and sycophants. Our self-love, rather than our self-interest, is the master-key to our affections. . . .

There are different modes of obligation, and different avenues to our gratitude and favour. A man may lend his countenance who will not part with his money, and open his mind to us who will not draw out his purse. How many ways are there in which our peace may be assailed besides actual want! How many comforts do we stand in need of besides meat and drink and clothing! Is it nothing to "administer to a mind diseased"—to heal a wounded spirit? After all other difficulties are removed, we still want some one to bear with our infirmities, to impart our confidence to, to encourage us in our *hobbies* (nay, to get up and ride behind us), and to like us with all our faults. True friendship is self-love at second hand; where, as in a flattering mirror, we may see our virtues magnified and our errors softened, and where we may fancy our opinion of ourselves confirmed by an impartial and faithful witness. He (of all the world) creeps closest to our bosoms, into our favour and esteem, who thinks of us most nearly as we do of ourselves. Such a one is indeed the pattern of a friend, another self—and our gratitude for the blessing is as sincere as it is hollow in most other cases! This is one reason why entire friendship is scarcely to be found except in love. There is a hardness and severity in our judgments of one another; the spirit of competition also intervenes, unless where there is too great an inequality of pretension or difference of taste to admit of mutual sympathy and respect; but a woman's vanity is interested in making the object of her choice the god of her idolatry; and in the intercourse with that sex, there is the finest balance and reflection of opposite and answering excellences imaginable! . . .

The difference of age, of situation in life, and an absence of all considerations of business have, I apprehend, something of the same effect in producing a refined and abstracted friendship. The person whose doors I enter with most pleasure, and quit with most regret, never did me the smallest favour. I once did him an uncalled-for service, and we nearly quarrelled about it. If I were in the utmost

distress, I should just as soon think of asking his assistance as of stopping a person on the highway. Practical benevolence is not his *forte*. He leaves the profession of that to others. His habits, his theory, are against it as idle and vulgar. His hand is closed, but what of that? His eye is ever open, and reflects the universe: his silver accents, beautiful, venerable as his silver hairs, but not scanted, flow as a river. I never ate or drank in his house; nor do I know or care how the flies or spiders fare in it, or whether a mouse can get a living. But I know that I can get there what I get nowhere else—a welcome, as if one was expected to drop in just at that moment, a total absence of all respect of persons and of airs of self-consequence, endless topics of discourse, refined thoughts, made more striking by ease and simplicity of manner—the husk, the shell of humanity is left at the door, and the spirit, mellowed by time, resides within! All you have to do is to sit and listen; and it is like hearing one of Titian's faces speak. To think of worldly matters is a profanation, like that of the money-changers in the Temple; or it is to regard the bread and wine of the Sacrament with carnal eyes. We enter the enchanter's cell, and converse with the divine inhabitant. To have this privilege always at hand, and to be circled by that spell whenever we choose with an "*Enter Sesame*," is better than sitting at the lower end of the tables of the great, than eating awkwardly from gold plate, than drinking fulsome toasts, or being thankful for gross favours, and gross insults!

WHETHER GENIUS IS CONSCIOUS OF ITS POWERS.

. . . THERE are two persons who always appear to me to have worked under this involuntary, silent impulse more than any others; I mean Rembrandt and Correggio. It is not known that Correggio ever saw a picture of any great master. He lived and died obscurely in an obscure village. We have few of his works, but they are all perfect. What truth, what grace, what angelic sweetness are there! Not one line or tone that is not divinely soft or exquisitely fair; the painter's mind rejecting, by a natural process, all that is discordant, coarse, or unpleasing. The whole is an emanation of pure thought. The work grew under his hand as if of itself, and came out without a flaw, like the diamond from the rock. He knew not what he did; and looked at each modest grace as it stole from the canvas with anxious delight and wonder. Ah, gracious God! not he alone; how many more in all time have looked at their works

with the same feelings, not knowing but they too may have done something divine, immortal, and finding in that sole doubt ample amends for pining solitude, for want, neglect, and an untimely fate! Oh! for one hour of that uneasy rapture, when the mind first thinks that it has struck out something that may last for ever; when the germ of excellence bursts from nothing on the startled sight! Take, take away the gaudy triumphs of the world, the long deathless shout of fame, and give back that heartfelt sigh with which the youthful enthusiasts first wed immortality as his secret bride! And thou too, Rembrandt! Thou wert a man of genius, if ever painter was a man of genius!—did this dream hang over you as you painted that strange picture of "Jacob's Ladder"? Did your eye strain over those gradual dusky clouds into futurity, or did those white-vested, beaked figures babble to you of fame as they approached? Did you know what you were about, or did you not paint much as it happened? Oh! if you had thought once about yourself or anything but the subject, it would have been all over with "the glory, the intuition, the amenity," the dream had fled, the spell had been broken. The hills would not have looked like those we see in sleep—that tatterdemalion figure of Jacob, thrown on one side, would not have slept as if the breath was fairly taken out of his body. So much do Rembrandt's pictures savour of the soul and body of reality, that the thoughts seem identical with the objects—if there had been the least question what he should have done, or how he should do it, or how far he had succeeded, it would have spoiled everything. Lumps of light hung upon his pencil and fell upon his canvas like dewdrops: the shadowy veil was drawn over his backgrounds by the dull, obtuse finger of night, making darkness visible by still greater darkness that could only be felt! . . .

The greatest pleasure in life is that of reading, while we are young. I have had as much of this pleasure as perhaps any one. As I grow older it fades; or else, the stronger stimulus of writing takes off the edge of it. At present, I have neither time nor inclination for it: yet I should like to devote a year's entire leisure to a course of the English Novelists; and perhaps clap on that sly old knave, Sir Walter, to the end of the list. It is astonishing how I used formerly to relish the style of certain authors, at a time when I myself despaired of ever writing a single line. Probably this was the reason. It is not in mental as in natural ascent—intellectual objects seem higher when we survey them from below, than when we look down from any given elevation above the common level. My three favourite writers about the time I speak of were Burke, Junius, and Rousseau. I was never weary of admiring and wondering at the

felicities of the style, the turns of expression, the refinements of thought and sentiment: I laid the book down to find out the secret of so much strength and beauty, and took it up again in despair, to read on and admire. So I passed whole days, months, and, I may add, years; and have only this to say now, that as my life began, so I could wish that it may end. The last time I tasted this luxury in its full perfection was one day after a sultry day's walk in summer between Farnham and Alton. I was fairly tired out; I walked into an inn-yard (I think at the latter place); I was shown by the waiter to what looked at first like common outhouses at the other end of it, but they turned out to be a suite of rooms, probably a hundred years old. The one I entered opened into an old-fashioned garden, embellished with beds of larkspur and a leaden Mercury; it was wainscoted, and there was a grave-looking, dark-coloured portrait of Charles II. hanging over the tiled chimney-piece. I had "Love for Love"[1] in my pocket, and began to read; coffee was brought in in a silver coffee-pot; the cream, the bread and butter, everything was excellent, and the flavour of Congreve's style prevailed over all. I prolonged the entertainment till a late hour, and relished this divine comedy better even than when I used to see it played by Miss Mellon, as *Miss Prue;* Bob Palmer, as *Tattle;* and Bannister, as honest *Ben.* This circumstance happened just five years ago, and it seems like yesterday. If I count my life so by lustres, it will soon glide away; yet I shall not have to repine, if, while it lasts, it is enriched with a few such recollections!

PRIDE.

[From the Essay "On Egotism."]

. . . I CAN conceive of nothing so little or so ridiculous as pride. It is a mixture of insensibility and ill-nature, in which it is hard to say which has the largest share. If a man knows or excels in, or has ever studied, any two things, I will venture to affirm he will be proud of neither. It is perhaps excusable for a person who is ignorant of all but one thing, to think *that* the sole excellence, and to be full of himself as the possessor. The way to cure him of this folly is to give him something else to be proud of. Vanity is a building that falls to the ground as you widen its foundation, or strengthen the props that should support it. The greater a man is, the less he necessarily thinks of himself, for his knowledge enlarges with his attainments. In himself he feels that he is nothing, a point, a speck in the

[1] Congreve's play.—ED.

universe, except as his mind reflects that universe, and as he enters into the infinite variety of truth, beauty, and power contained in it. Let any one be brought up among books, and taught to think words the only things, and he may conceive highly of himself from the proficiency he has made in language and in letters. Let him then be compelled to attempt some other pursuit—painting, for instance—and be made to feel the difficulties, the refinements of which it is capable, and the number of things of which he was utterly ignorant before, and there will be an end of his pedantry and his pride together. Nothing but the want of comprehension of view or generosity of spirit can make any one fix on his own particular acquirement as the limit of all excellence. No one is (generally speaking) great in more than one thing—if he extends his pursuits, he dissipates his strength—yet in that one thing how small is the interval between him and the next in merit and reputation to himself! But he thinks nothing of, or scorns or loathes the name of his rival, so that all that the other possesses in common goes for nothing, and the fraction of a difference between them constitutes (in his opinion) the sum and substance of all that is excellent in the universe! Let a man be wise, and then let us ask, Will his wisdom make him proud? Let him excel all others in the graces of the mind, has he also those of the body? He has the advantage of fortune, but has he also that of birth? or if he has both, has he health, strength, beauty, in a supreme degree? Or have not others the same? or does he think all these nothing because he does not possess them? The proud man fancies that there is no one worth regarding but himself: he might as well fancy there is no other being but himself. The one is not a greater stretch of madness than the other. To make pride justifiable, there ought to be but one proud man in the world, for if any one individual has a right to be so, nobody else has. So far from thinking ourselves superior to all the rest of the species, we cannot be sure that we are above the meanest and most despised individual of it: for he may have some virtue, some excellence, some source of happiness or usefulness within himself, which may redeem all other disadvantages: or even if he is without any such hidden worth, this is not a subject of exultation, but of regret, to any one tinctured with the smallest humanity, and he who is totally devoid of the latter cannot have much reason to be proud of anything else. Arkwright, who invented the spinning-jenny, for many years kept a paltry barber's shop in a provincial town: yet at that time that wonderful machinery was working in his brain, which has added more to the wealth and resources of this country than all the pride of ancestry

or insolence of-upstart nobility for the last hundred years. We should be cautious whom we despise. If we do not know them, we can have no right to pronounce a hasty sentence: if we do, they may espy some few defects in us. *No man is a hero to his valet-de-chambre.* What is it, then, that makes the difference? The dress and pride. But he is the most of a hero who is least distinguished by the one and most free from the other. If we enter into conversation upon equal terms with the lowest of the people, unrestrained by circumstance, unawed by interest, we shall find in ourselves but little superiority over them. If we know what they do not, they know what we do not. In general, those who do things for others, know more about them than those for whom they are done. A groom knows more about horses than his master. He rides them too: but the one rides behind, the other before! Hence the number of forms and ceremonies that have been invented to keep the magic circle of fancied self-importance inviolate. The late King sought but one interview with Dr. Johnson: his present Majesty is never tired of the company of Mr. Croker.

ON READING OLD BOOKS.

. . . I DO not think altogether the worse of a book for having survived the author a generation or two. I have more confidence in the dead than the living. Contemporary writers may generally be divided into two classes—one's friends or one's foes. Of the first we are compelled to think too well, and of the last we are disposed to think too ill, to receive much genuine pleasure from the perusal, or to judge fairly of the merits of either. One candidate for literary fame, who happens to be of our acquaintance, writes finely, and like a man of genius; but unfortunately has a foolish face, which spoils a delicate passage:—another inspires us with the highest respect for his personal talents and character, but does not quite come up to our expectations in print. All these contradictions and petty details interrupt the calm current of our reflections. If you want to know what any of the authors were who lived before our time, and are still objects of anxious inquiry, you have only to look into their works. But the dust and smoke and noise of modern literature have nothing in common with the pure, silent air of immortality.

When I take up a work that I have read before (the oftener the better) I know what I have to expect. The satisfaction is not lessened by being anticipated. When the entertainment is

altogether new, I sit down to it as I should to a strange dish,—turn and pick out a bit here and there, and am in doubt what to think of the composition. There is a want of confidence and security to second appetite. New-fangled books are also like made-dishes in this respect, that they are generally little else than hashes and *rifaccimenti* of what has been served up entire and in a more natural state at other times. Besides, in thus turning to a well-known author, there is not only an assurance that my time will not be thrown away, or my palate nauseated with the most insipid or vilest trash,—but I shake hands with, and look an old, tried, and valued friend in the face,—compare notes, and chat the hours away. It is true, we form dear friendships with such ideal guests—dearer, alas! and more lasting, than those with our most intimate acquaintance. In reading a book which is an old favourite with me (say the first novel I ever read) I not only have the pleasure of imagination and of a critical relish of the work, but the pleasures of memory added to it. It recalls the same feelings and associations which I had in first reading it, and which I can never have again in any other way. Standard productions of this kind are links in the chain of our conscious being. They bind together the different scattered divisions of our personal identity. They are landmarks and guides in our journey through life. They are pegs and loops on which we can hang up, or from which we can take down, at pleasure, the wardrobe of a moral imagination, the relics of our best affections, the tokens and records of our happiest hours. They are "for thoughts and for remembrance!" They are like Fortunatus's Wishing-Cap—they give us the best riches—those of Fancy; and transport us, not over half the globe, but (which is better) over half our lives, at a word's notice!

My father Shandy solaced himself with Bruscambille. Give me for this purpose a volume of "Peregrine Pickle" or "Tom Jones." Open either of them anywhere—at the "Memoirs of Lady Vane," or the adventures at the masquerade with Lady Bellaston, or the disputes between Thwackum and Square, or the escape of Molly Seagrim, or the incident of Sophia and her muff, or the edifying prolixity of her aunt's lecture—and there I find the same delightful, busy, bustling scene as ever, and feel myself the same as when I was first introduced into the midst of it. Nay, sometimes the sight of an odd volume of these good old English authors on a stall, or the name lettered on the back among others on the shelves of a library, answers the purpose, revives the whole train of ideas, and sets "the puppets dallying." Twenty years are struck off the list, and I am a child again. A sage philosopher, who was not a very wise man, said,

that he should like very well to be young again, if he could take his experience along with him. This ingenious person did not seem to be aware, by the gravity of his remark, that the great advantage of being young is to be without this weight of experience, which he would fain place upon the shoulders of youth, and which never comes too late with years. Oh! what a privilege to be able to let this hump, like Christian's burthen, drop from off one's back, and transport oneself, by the help of a little musty duodecimo, to the time when "ignorance was bliss," and when we first got a peep at the raree-show of the world, through the glass of fiction—gazing at mankind, as we do at wild beasts in a menagerie, through the bars of their cages,—or at curiosities in a museum, that we must not touch! For myself, not only are the old ideas of the contents of the work brought back to my mind in all their vividness, but the old associations of the faces and persons of those I then knew, as they were in their lifetime—the place where I sat to read the volume, the day when I got it, the feeling of the air, the fields, the sky—return, and all my early impressions with them. This is better to me—those places, those times, those persons, and those feelings that come across me as I retrace the story and devour the page are to me better far than the wet sheets of the last new novel from the Ballantyne press, to say nothing of the Minerva press in Leadenhall Street. It is like visiting the scenes of early youth. I think of the time "when I was in my father's house, and my path ran down with butter and honey,"—when I was a little thoughtless child, and had no other wish or care but to con my daily task and be happy!—"Tom Jones," I remember, was the first work that broke the spell. It came down in numbers once a fortnight, in Cooke's pocket-edition, embellished with cuts. I had hitherto read only in school-books, and a tiresome ecclesiastical history (with the exception of Mrs Radcliffe's "Romance of the Forest"): but this had a different relish with it,—"sweet in the mouth," though not "bitter in the belly." It smacked of the world I lived in, and in which I was to live—and showed me groups, "gay creatures" not "of the element," but of the earth; not "living in the clouds," but travelling the same road that I did;—some that had passed on before me, and others that might soon overtake me. My heart had palpitated at the thoughts of a boarding-school ball, or gala-day at Midsummer or Christmas: but the world I had found out in Cooke's edition of the "British Novelists" was to me a dance through life, a perpetual gala-day. The sixpenny numbers of this work regularly contrived to leave off just in the middle of a sentence, and in the nick of a story. With what eagerness I used to look forward to the next number,

and open the prints! Ah! never again shall I feel the enthusiastic delight with which I gazed at the figures, and anticipated the story and adventures of Major Bath and Commodore Trunnion, of Trim and my Uncle Toby, of Don Quixote and Sancho and Dapple, of Gil Blas and Dame Lorenza Sephora, of Laura and the fair Lucretia, whose lips open and shut like buds of roses. To what nameless ideas did they give rise,—with what airy delights I filled up the outlines, as I hung in silence over the page!—Let me still recall them, that they may breathe fresh life into me, and that I may live that birthday of thought and romantic pleasure over again! Talk of the *ideal!* This is the only true ideal—the heavenly tints of Fancy reflected in the bubbles that float upon the spring-tide of human life.

> "O Memory! shield me from the world's poor strife,
> And give those scenes thine everlasting life!"

. . . I remember, as long ago as the year 1798, going to a neighbouring town (Shrewsbury, where Farquhar has laid the plot of his "Recruiting Officer"), and bringing home with me, "at one proud swoop," a copy of Milton's "Paradise Lost," and another of Burke's "Reflections on the French Revolution"—both which I have still; and I still recollect, when I see the covers, the pleasure with which I dipped into them as I returned with my double prize. I was set up for one while. That time is past "with all its giddy raptures:" but I am still anxious to preserve its memory, "embalmed with odours." . . . Again, as to the other work, Burke's "Reflections," I took a particular pride and pleasure in it, and read it to myself and others for months afterwards. I had reason for my prejudice in favour of this author. To understand an adversary is some praise: to admire him is more. I thought I did both: I knew I did one. From the first time I ever cast my eyes on anything of Burke's (which was an extract from his "Letter to a Noble Lord" in a three-times-a-week paper, the *St. James's Chronicle*, in 1796), I said to myself, "This is true eloquence: this is a man pouring out his mind on paper." All other style seemed to me pedantic and impertinent. Dr. Johnson's was walking on stilts; and even Junius's (who was at that time a favourite with me), with all his terseness, shrank up into little antithetic points and well-trimmed sentences. But Burke's style was forked and playful as the lightning, crested like the serpent. He delivered plain things on a plain ground; but when he rose, there was no end of his flights and circumgyrations—and in this very Letter, "he, like an eagle in a dovecot, fluttered *his* Volscians" (the Duke of Bedford and the Earl of Lauderdale) "in Corioli." I

did not care for his doctrines. I was then, and am still, proof against their contagion; but I admired the author, and was considered as not a very staunch partisan of the opposite side, though I thought myself that an abstract proposition was one thing—a masterly transition, a brilliant metaphor, another. I conceived, too, that he might be wrong in his main argument, and yet deliver fifty truths in arriving at a false conclusion. I remember Coleridge assuring me, as a poetical and political set-off to my sceptical admiration, that Wordsworth had written an "Essay on Marriage," which, for manly thought and nervous expression, he deemed incomparably superior. As I had not, at that time, seen any specimens of Mr. Wordsworth's prose style, I could not express my doubts on the subject. If there are greater prose-writers than Burke, they either lie out of my course of study or are beyond my sphere of comprehension. I am too old to be a convert to a new mythology of genius. The niches are occupied, the tables are full. If such is still my admiration of this man's misapplied powers, what must it have been at a time when I myself was in vain trying, year after year, to write a single essay, nay, a single page or sentence; when I regarded the wonders of his pen with the longing eyes of one who was dumb and a changeling; and when to be able to convey the slightest conception of my meaning to others in words was the height of an almost hopeless ambition! But I never measured others' excellences by my own defects: though a sense of my own incapacity, and of the steep, impassable ascent from me to them, made me regard them with greater awe and fondness. I have thus run through most of my early studies and favourite authors, some of whom I have since criticised more at large. Whether those observations will survive me, I neither know nor do I much care: but to the works themselves, "worthy of all acceptation," and to the feelings they have always excited in me since I could distinguish a meaning in language, nothing shall ever prevent me from looking back with gratitude and triumph. To have lived in the cultivation of an intimacy with such works, and to have familiarly relished such names, is not to have lived quite in vain.

There are other authors whom I have never read, and yet whom I have frequently had a great desire to read, from some circumstance relating to them. Among these is Lord Clarendon's "History of the Grand Rebellion," after which I have a hankering, from hearing it spoken of by good judges, from my interest in the events, and knowledge of the characters from other sources, and from having seen fine portraits of most of them. I like to read a well-penned character, and Clarendon is said to have been a master in his way.

I should like to read Froissart's "Chronicles," Holinshed and Stowe, and Fuller's "Worthies." I intend, whenever I can, to read Beaumont and Fletcher all through. There are fifty-two of their plays, and I have only read a dozen or fourteen of them. "A Wife for a Month" and "Thierry and Theodoret" are, I am told, delicious, and I can believe it. I should like to read the speeches in "Thucydides," and Guicciardini's "History of Florence," and "Don Quixote" in the original. I have often thought of reading the "Loves of Persiles and Sigismunda," and the "Galatea" of the same author. But I somehow reserve them like "another Yarrow." I should also like to read the last new novel (if I could be sure it was so) of the author of "Waverley:"—no one would be more glad than I to find it the best!

ON NOVELTY AND FAMILIARITY.

. . . THE best part of our lives we pass in counting on what is to come, or in fancying what may have happened in real or fictitious story to others. I have had more pleasure in reading the adventures of a novel (and perhaps changing situations with the hero) than I ever had in my own. I do not think any one can feel much happier —a greater degree of heart's ease—than I used to feel in reading "Tristram Shandy," and "Peregrine Pickle," and "Tom Jones," and the "Tatler," and "Gil Blas of Santillane," and "Werter," and "Boccaccio." It was some years after that I read the last, but his tales

> "Dallied with the innocence of love,
> Like the old Time."

The story of Frederigo Alberigi affected me as if it had been my own case, and I saw his hawk upon her perch in the clear, cold air, "and how fat and fair a bird she was," as plain as ever I saw a picture of Titian's; and felt that I should have served her up as he did, as a banquet for his mistress, who came to visit him at his own poor farm. I could wish that Lord Byron had employed himself while in Italy in rescuing such a writer as Boccaccio from unmerited obloquy, instead of making those notable discoveries—that Pope was a poet, and that Shakspeare was not one! Mrs. Inchbald was always a great favourite with me. There is the true soul of woman breathing from what she writes, as much as if you heard her voice. It is as if Venus had written books. I first read her "Simple Story" (of all places in the world) at M——. No matter where it was; for it transported me out of myself. I recollect walking out

to escape from one of the tenderest parts, in order to return to it again with double relish. An old crazy hand-organ was playing "Robin Adair;" a summer-shower dropped manna on my head, and slaked my feverish thirst of happiness. Her heroine, Miss Milner, was at my side. My dream has since been verified:—how like it was to the reality! In truth, the reality itself was but a dream. Do I not still see that "simple movement of her finger" with which Madam Basil beckoned Jean Jacques to the seat at her feet, the heightened colour that tinged her profile as she sat at her work netting, the bunch of flowers in her hair? Is not the glow of youth and beauty in her cheek blended with the blushes of the roses in her hair? Do they not breathe the breath of love? And (what though the adventure was unfinished by either writer or reader?) is not the blank filled up with the rare and subtle spirit of fancy, that imparts the fulness of delight to the air-drawn creations of brain? I once sat on a sunny bank in a field in which the green blades of corn waved in the fitful northern breeze, and read the letter in the "New Eloise" in which St. Preux describes the Pays de Vaud. I never felt what Shakspeare calls my "glassy essence" so much as then. My thoughts were pure and free. They took a tone from the objects before me, and from the simple manners of the inhabitants of mountain-scenery so well described in the letter. The style gave me the same sensation as the drops of morning dew before they are scorched by the sun; and I thought Julia did well to praise it. I wished I could have written such a letter. That wish, enhanced by my admiration of genius and the feeling of the objects around me, was accompanied with more pleasure than if I had written fifty such letters, or had gained all the reputation of its immortal author! Of all the pictures, prints, or drawings I ever saw, none ever gave me such satisfaction as the rude etchings at the top of Rousseau's "Confessions." There is a necromatic spell in the outlines. Imagination is a witch. It is not even said anywhere that such is the case, but I had got it into my head that the rude sketches of old-fashioned houses, stone-walls, and stumps of trees represented the scenes at Annecy and Vevay, where he who relished all more sharply than others, and by his own intense aspirations after good had nearly delivered mankind from the yoke of evil, first drew the breath of hope. Here love's golden rigol bound his brows, and here fell from it. It was the partition-wall between life and death to him, and all beyond it was a desert! . . .

"And bade the lovely scenes at distance hail."

I used to apply this line to the distant range of hills in a paltry

landscape, which, however, had a tender vernal tone and a dewy freshness. I could look at them till my eyes filled with tears and my heart dissolved in faintness. Why do I recall the circumstance after a lapse of years with so much interest? Because I felt it then. Those feeble outlines were linked in my mind to the purest, fondest yearnings after good; that dim, airy space contained my little all of hope, buoyed up by charming fears; the delight with which I dwelt upon it, enhanced by my ignorance of what was in store for me, was free from mortal grossness, familiarity, or disappointment, and I drank pleasure out of the bosom of the silent hills and gleaming valleys as from a cup filled to the brim with love-philtres and poisonous sweetness by the sorceress Fancy!

ON OLD ENGLISH WRITERS AND SPEAKERS.

The expression in Holbein's pictures conveys a faithful but not very favourable notion of the literary character of that period. It is painful, dry, and laboured. Learning was then an ascetic, but recluse and profound. You see a weight of thought and care in the studious heads of the time of the Reformation, a sincerity, an integrity, a sanctity of purpose, like that of a formal dedication to a religious life or the inviolability of monastic vows. They had their work to do; we reap the benefits of it. We skim the surface, and travel along the high-road. They had to explore dark recesses, to dig through mountains, and make their way through pathless wildernesses. It is no wonder they looked grave upon it. The seriousness, indeed, amounts to an air of devotion; and it has to me something fine, manly, and *old English* about it. There is a heartiness and determined resolution; a willingness to contend with opposition; a superiority to ease and pleasure; some sullen pride, but no trifling vanity. They addressed themselves to study as to a duty, and were ready to "leave all and follow it." In the beginning of such an era, the difference between ignorance and learning, between what was commonly known and what was possible to be known, would appear immense; and no pains or time would be thought too great to master the difficulty. Conscious of their own deficiencies and the scanty information of those about them, they would be glad to look out for aids and support, and to put themselves apprentices to time and nature. This temper would lead them to exaggerate rather than to make light of the difficulties of their undertaking, and would call forth sacrifices in proportion. Feeling how little they knew, they would be anxious to discover all that others had

known, and instead of making a display of themselves, their first object would be to dispel the mist and darkness that surrounded them. They did not cull the flowers of learning, or pluck a leaf of laurel for their own heads, but tugged at the roots and very heart of their subject, as the woodman tugs at the roots of the gnarled oak. The sense of the arduousness of their enterprise braced their courage, so that they left nothing half-done. They inquired *de omne scibile et quibusdam aliis*. They ransacked libraries, they exhausted authorities. They acquired languages, consulted books, and deciphered manuscripts. They devoured learning, and swallowed antiquity whole, and (what is more) digested it. They read incessantly, and remembered what they read, from the zealous interest they took in it. Repletion is only bad when it is accompanied with apathy and want of exercise. They laboured hard, and showed great activity both of reasoning and speculation. Their fault was, that they were too prone to unlock the secrets of nature with the key of learning, and often to substitute authority in the place of argument. They were also too polemical, as was but naturally to be expected in the first breaking-up of established prejudices and opinions. It is curious to observe the slow progress of the human mind in loosening and getting rid of its trammels, link by link, and how it crept on its hands and feet, and with its eyes bent on the ground, out of the cave of Bigotry, making its way through one dark passage after another; those who gave up one half of an absurdity contending as strenuously for the remaining half, the lazy current of tradition stemming the tide of innovation, and making an endless struggle between the two. But in the dullest minds of this period there was a deference to the opinions of their leaders; an imposing sense of the importance of the subject, of the necessity of bringing all the faculties to bear upon it; a weight either of armour or of internal strength, a zeal either *for* or *against;* a head, a heart, and a hand, a holding out to the death for conscience' sake, a strong spirit of proselytism—no flippancy, no indifference, no compromising, no pert, shallow scepticism, but truth was supposed indissolubly knit to good, knowledge to usefulness, and the temporal and eternal welfare of mankind to hang in the balance. The pure springs of a lofty faith (so to speak) had not then descended by various gradations from their skyey regions and cloudy height, to find their level in the smooth, glittering expanse of modern philosophy, or to settle in the stagnant pool of stale hypocrisy! A learned man of that day, if he knew no better than others, at least knew all that they did. He did not come to his subject, like some dapper barrister who has never looked at his brief, and trusts to the smartness of his wit and person for

the agreeable effect he means to produce, but like an old and practised counsellor, covered over with the dust and cobwebs of the law. If it was a speaker in Parliament, he came prepared to handle his subject, armed with cases and precedents, the constitution and history of Parliament from the earliest period, a knowledge of the details of business and the local interests of the country; in short, he had taken up *the freedom of the House*, and did not treat the question like a cosmopolite or a writer in a magazine. If it were a divine, he knew the Scriptures and the Fathers, and the Councils and the Commentators, by heart, and thundered them in the ears of his astonished audience. Not a trim essay or a tumid oration, patronising religion by modern sophisms, but the Law and the Prophets, the chapter and the verse. If it was a philosopher, Aristotle and the Schoolmen were drawn out in battle-array against you:—if an antiquarian, the Lord bless us! There is a passage in Selden's notes on Drayton's "Poly-Olbion," in which he elucidates some point of topography by a reference not only to Stowe, and Holinshed, and Camden, and Saxo-Grammaticus, and Dugdale, and several other authors that we are acquainted with, but to twenty obscure names, that no modern reader ever heard of; and so on through the notes to a folio volume, written apparently for relaxation. Such were the intellectual amusements of our ancestors! Learning then ordinarily lay-in of folio volumes: now she litters octavos and duodecimos, and will soon, as in France, miscarry of half-sheets! Poor Job Orton! Why should I not record a jest of his (perhaps the only one he ever made), emblematic as it is of the living and the learning of the good old times? The Rev. Job Orton was a Dissenting minister in the middle of the last century, and had grown heavy and gouty by sitting long at dinner and at his studies. He could only get downstairs at last by spreading the folio volumes of Caryl's "Commentaries upon Job" on the steps and sliding down them. Surprised one day in his descent, he exclaimed, "You have often heard of Caryl upon Job—now you see Job upon Caryl!" This same quaint-witted gouty old gentleman seems to have been one of those "superior, happy spirits" who slid through life on the rollers of learning, enjoying the good things of the world and laughing at them, and turning his infirmities to a livelier account than his patriarchal namesake. Reader, didst thou ever hear either of Job Orton or of Caryl on Job? I dare say not. Yet the one did not therefore slide down his theological staircase the less pleasantly; nor did the other compile his Commentaries in vain! For myself, I should like to browse on folios, and have to deal chiefly with authors that I have scarcely strength to lift, that are as solid as

they are heavy, and if dull, are full of matter. It is delightful to repose on the wisdom of the ancients; to have some great name at hand, besides one's own initials always staring one in the face; to travel out of oneself into the Chaldee, Hebrew, and Egyptian characters; to have the palm-trees waving mystically in the margin of the page, and the camels moving slowly on in the distance of three thousand years. In that dry desert of learning we gather strength and patience, and a strange and insatiable thirst of knowledge. The ruined monuments of antiquity are also there, and the fragments of buried cities (under which the adder lurks), and cool springs, and green sunny spots, and the whirlwind, and the lion's roar, and the shadow of angelic wings. To those who turn with supercilious disgust from the ponderous tomes of scholastic learning, who never felt the witchery of the Talmuds and the Cabbala, of the Commentators and the Schoolmen, of texts and authorities, of types and antitypes, hieroglyphics and mysteries, dogmas and contradictions, and endless controversies and doubtful labyrinths, and quaint traditions, I would recommend the lines of Warton written in a blank leaf of Dugdale's "Monasticon:"

> "Deem not devoid of elegance the sage,
> By fancy's genuine feelings unbeguiled,
> Of painful pedantry the poring child,
> Who turns of these proud tomes the historic page,
> Now sunk by time and Henry's fiercer rage.
> Think'st thou the warbling Muses never smiled
> On his lone hours? Ingenious views engage
> His thoughts, on themes (unclassic falsely styled)
> Intent. While cloister'd piety displays
> Her mouldering scroll, the piercing eye explores
> New manners and the pomp of elder days;
> Whence culls the pensive bard his pictured stores.
> Nor rough nor barren are the winding ways
> Of hoar Antiquity, but strewn with flowers."

* * *

IDENTITY OF THE AUTHOR WITH HIS BOOKS.

[From the Essay "On the Jealousy and the Spleen of Party."]

. . . WHATEVER the reader thinks fine in books assuredly existed before in the living volume of the author's brain: that which is a passing and casual impression in the one case, a floating image, an empty sound, is in the other an heirloom of the mind, the very form into which it is warped and moulded, a deep and inward harmony that flows on for ever, as the springs of memory and imagination unlock

their secret stores. "Thoughts that glow and words that burn" are his daily sustenance. He leads a spiritual life, and walks with God. The personal is, as much as may be, lost in the universal. He is Nature's high-priest, and his mind is a temple where she treasures up her fairest and loftiest forms. These he broods over, till he becomes enamoured of them, inspired by them, and communicates some portion of his ethereal fires to others. For these he has given up everything, wealth, pleasure, ease, health; and yet we are to be told he takes no interest in them, does not enter into the meaning of the words he uses, or feel the force of the ideas he imprints upon the brain of others. *Let us give the devil his due.* An author, I grant, may be deficient in dress or address, may neglect his person and his fortune—

> "But his soul is fair,
> Bright as the children of yon azure sheen:"

he may be full of inconsistencies elsewhere, but he is himself in his books: he may be ignorant of the world we live in, but that he is not at home and enchanted with that fairy-world which hangs upon his pen, that he does not reign and revel in the creations of his own fancy, or tread with awe and delight the stately domes and empyrean palaces of eternal truth, the portals of which he opens to us, is what I cannot take Mr. Moore's word for. He does not "give us reason with his rhyme." An author's appearance or his actions may not square with his theories or descriptions, but his mind is seen in his writings, as his face is in the glass. All the faults of the literary character, in short, arise out of the predominance of the professional *mania* of such persons, and their absorption in those *ideal* studies and pursuits, their affected regard to which the poet tells us is a mere mockery, and a barefaced insult to people of plain, straightforward, practical sense and unadorned pretensions, like himself. . . . In turning to the "Castle of Indolence" for the lines quoted a little way back, I chanced to light upon another passage which I cannot help transcribing:

> "I care not, Fortune, what you me deny:
> You cannot rob me of free Nature's grace;
> You cannot shut the windows of the sky,
> Through which Aurora shows her brightening face;
> You cannot bar my constant feet to trace
> The woods and lawns by living stream at eve:
> Let health my nerves and finer fibres brace,
> And I their toys to the great children leave:
> Of fancy, reason, virtue, nought can me bereave."

Were the sentiments here so beautifully expressed mere affectation

in Thomson, or are we to make it a rule that as a writer imparts to us a sensation of disinterested delight, he himself has none of the feeling he excites in us? This is one way of showing our gratitude, and being even with him.

> "Books, dreams are each a world, and books, we know,
> Are a substantial world, both pure and good;
> Round which, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
> Our pastime and our happiness may grow."

Let me, then, conjure the gentle reader, who has ever felt an attachment to books, not hastily to divorce them from their authors. Whatever love or reverence may be due to the one is equally owing to the other. The volume we prize may be little, old, shabbily bound, an imperfect copy, does not step down from the shelf to give us a graceful welcome, nor can it extend a hand to serve us in extremity, and so far may be like the author; but whatever there is of truth or good, or of proud consolation or of cheering hope, in the one, all this existed in a greater degree in the imagination and the heart and brain of the other. To cherish the work and *damn* the author is as if the traveller who slakes his thirst at the running stream should revile the spring-head from which it gushes. I do not speak of the degree of passion felt by Rousseau towards Madame Warens, nor of his treatment of her, nor hers of him; but that he thought of her for years with the tenderest yearnings of affection and regret, and felt towards her all that he has made his readers feel, this I cannot for a moment doubt. So far, then, he is no impostor or juggler. Still less could he have given a new and personal character to the literature of Europe, and changed the tone of sentiment and the face of society, if he had not felt the strongest interest in persons and things, or had been the heartless pretender he is sometimes held out to us. . . .

"VIVIAN GREY" AND THE DANDY SCHOOL.

[Appeared in the *Examiner*, November 18, 1827, under the head of *The Dandy School.*]

[It is a striking proof of Hazlitt's keen insight, that he so unerringly took the moral measure of the then unknown author of "Vivian Grey." He detected at once the vulgar affectation of gentility, the selfishness, and disbelief in unselfish motives of action, the worship of success, the absence of all conception of true greatness, and the general self-seeking spirit which pervades the novel—contrasting its aims and those of kindred productions by Theodore Hook with the nobler ideals of such manly and healthy writers as Scott.]

. . . It was formerly understood to be the business of literature to enlarge the bounds of knowledge and feeling; to direct the mind's eye beyond the present moment and the present object; to plunge us in the world of romance, to connect different languages, manners, times together; to wean us from the grossness of sense, the illusions of self-love;—by the aid of imagination, to place us in the situations of others and enable us to feel an interest in all that strikes them; and to make books the faithful witnesses and interpreters of nature and the human heart. Of late, instead of this liberal and useful tendency, it has taken a narrower and more superficial tone. All that we learn from it is the servility, egotism, and upstart pretensions of the writers. Instead of transporting you to faery-land or into the *middle* ages, you take a turn down Bond Street or go through the mazes of the dance at Almack's. You have no new inlet to thought or feeling opened to you; but the passing object, the topic of the day (however insipid or repulsive), is served up to you with a self-sufficient air, as if you had not already had enough of it. You dip into an essay or a novel, and may fancy yourself reading a collection of quack or fashionable advertisements:—Macassar Oil, Eau de Cologne, Hock and Seltzer Water, Otto of Roses, *Pomade Divine*, glance through the page in inextricable confusion, and make your head giddy. Far from extending your sympathies, they are narrowed to a single point, the admiration of the folly, caprice, insolence, and affectation of a certain class;—so that, with the exception of people who ride in their carriages, you are taught to look down upon the rest of the species with indifference, abhorrence, or contempt. A schoolmaster in a black coat is a monster —a tradesman and his wife who eat cold mutton and pickled cab-

bage are wretches to be hunted out of society. That is the end and moral of it: it is part and parcel of a system. The *Dandy School* give the finishing-touch to the principles of paternal government. First comes the political sycophant, and makes the people over to their rulers as a property in perpetuity; but then they are to be handled tenderly, and need not complain, since the sovereign is the father of his people, and we are to be all one family of love. So says the "Austrian Catechism." Then comes the literary sycophant to finish what the other had begun; and the poor fools of people having been caught in the trap of plausible professions, he takes off the mask of *paternity*, treats them as of a different species instead of members of the same family, loads them with obloquy and insult, and laughs at the very idea of any fellow-feeling with or consideration towards them, as the height of bad taste, weakness, and vulgarity. So says Mr. Theodore Hook and the author of "Vivian Grey." So says not Sir Walter. Ever while you live, go to a man of genius in preference to a dunce; for, let his prejudices or his party be what they may, there is still a saving grace about him, for he himself has something else to trust to besides his subserviency to greatness to raise him from insignificance. He takes you and places you in a cottage or a cavern, and makes you feel the deepest interest in it, for you feel all that its inmates feel. The *Dandy School* tell you all that a dandy would feel in such circumstances, viz., that he was not in a drawing-room or at Long's. Or if he does forfeit his character for a moment, he at most brings himself to patronise humanity, condescends to the accidents of common life, touches the pathetic with his pen as if it were with a pair of tongs, and while he just deigns to notice the existence or endure the infirmities of his fellow-creatures, indemnifies his vanity by snatching a conscious glance at his own person and perfections. Whatever is going on, he himself is the hero of the scene; the distress (however excruciating) derives its chief claim to attention from the singular circumstance of his being present; and he manages the whole like a piece of private theatricals with an air of the most absolute *nonchalance* and decorum. The Whole Duty of Man is turned into a butt and by-word, or like Mr. Martin's Bill for humanity to animals, is a pure voluntary, a caprice of effeminate sensibility: the great business of life is a kind of masquerade or melodrama got up for effect and by particular desire of the Great. We soon grow tired of nature so treated, and are glad to turn to the follies and fopperies of high life, into which the writer enters with more relish, and where he finds himself more at home. So Mr. Croker (in his place in the House of Commons) does not know where Bloomsbury Square is:

thus affecting to level all the houses in the metropolis that are not at the Court-end, and leaving them tenantless by a paltry sneer, as if a plague had visited them. It is no wonder that his *protégés* and understrappers out of doors should echo this official impertinence—draw the line still closer between the East and West End—arrest a stray sentiment at the corner of a street, relegate elegance to a fashionable square—annihilate all other enjoyments, all other pretensions, but those of their employers—reduce the bulk of mankind to a cipher, and make all but a few pampered favourites of fortune dissatisfied with themselves and contemptible to one another. The reader's mind is so varnished over with affectation that not an avenue to truth or feeling is left open, and it is stifled for want of breath. Send these people across the Channel who make such a fuss about the East and West End, and no one can find out the difference. The English are not a nation of *dandies;* nor can John Bull afford (whatever the panders to fashion and admirers of courtly graces may say to the contrary) to rest all his pretensions upon that. He must descend to a broader and more manly level to keep his ground at all. Those who would persuade him to build up his fame on frogged coats or on the embellishments of a snuff-box, he should scatter with one loud roar of indignation and trample into the earth like grasshoppers, as making not only a beast but an ass of him.

A writer of this accomplished stamp comes forward to tell you, not how his hero feels on any occasion—for he is above that—but how he was dressed, and makes him a mere lay-figure of fashion with a few pert, current phrases in his mouth. The Sir Sedley Clarendels and Meadowses of a former age are become the real fine gentlemen of this. Then he gives you the address of his heroine's milliner, lest any shocking surmise should arise in your mind of the possibility of her dealing with a person of less approved taste, and also informs you that the quality eat fish with silver forks. This is all he knows about the matter: is this all they feel? The fact is new to him: it is old to them. It is so new to him and he is so delighted with it, that, provided a few select persons eat fish with silver forks, he considers it a circumstance of no consequence if a whole country starves: but these privileged persons are not surely thinking all the time and every day of their lives of that which Mr. Theodore Hook has never forgotten since he first witnessed it, viz., that *they eat their fish with a silver fork.* What, then, are they thinking of in their intervals of leisure—what are their feelings that *we* can be supposed to know nothing of? Will Mr. Theodore Hook, who is "comforted with their bright radiance, though not in their sphere," condescend to give us a glimpse of these, that we may admire their real elegance

and refinement as much as he does a frogged coat or silver fork? It is cruel in him not to do so. "The *Court*, as well as we, may chide him for it." He once criticised a city feast with great minuteness and bitterness, in which (as it appears) the sideboard is ill-arranged, the footman makes a blunder, the cook has sent up a dish too little or too highly seasoned. Something is wanting, as Mr. Hook insinuates is necessarily the case whenever people in the neighbourhood of Russell Square give dinners. But that something is not the manners or conversation of gentlemen—this never enters his head—but something that the butler, the cook, or the valet of people of fashion could have remedied quite as well (to say the least) as their masters. It is here the cloven foot, the under-bred tone, the undue admiration of external circumstances, breaks out and betrays the writer. Mr. Hook has a fellow-feeling with low life, or rather with vulgarity aping gentility, but he has never got beyond the outside of what he calls *good society*. He can lay the cloth or play the buffoon after dinner—but that is the utmost he can pretend to. We have in "Sayings and Doings" and in "Vivian Grey" abundance of Lady Marys and Lady Dorothys, but they are titles without characters, or the blank is filled up with the most trite impertinence. So a young linen-draper or attorney's clerk from the country, who had gained a thirty thousand pound prize in the lottery and wished to set up for a fine gentleman, might learn from these novels what hotel to put up at, what watering-place to go to, what hatter, hosier, tailor, shoemaker, *friseur*, to employ, what part of the town he should be seen in, what theatre he might frequent; but how to behave, speak, look, feel, or think in his new and more aspiring character he would not find the most distant hint in the gross caricatures or flimsy sketches of the most mechanical and shallow of all schools. It is really as if, in lieu of our royal and fashionable "Society of Authors," a deputation of tailors, cooks, lackeys, had taken possession of Parnassus, and had appointed some Abigail out of place perpetual Secretary. The Congreves, Wycherleys, and Vanbrughs of former days gave us some taste of gentility and courtly refinement in their plays: enchanted us with their *Millamants*, or made us bow with respect to their *Lord Townleys*. It would seem that the race of these is over, or that our modern scribes have not had access to them on a proper footing—that is, not for their talents or conversation, but as mountebanks or political drudges.

At first it appears strange that persons of so low a station in life should be seized with such a rage to inveigh against themselves, and make us despise all but a few arrogant people, who pay them ill for what they do. But this is the natural process of servility, and we

see all valets and hangers-on of the Great do the same thing. The powdered footman looks down on the rabble that dog his master's coach as beneath his notice. He feels the one little above him, and the other (by consequence) infinitely below him. Authors at present would be thought gentlemen, as gentlemen have a fancy to turn authors. The first thing a *dandy scribbler* does is to let us know he is dressed in the height of the fashion (otherwise we might imagine him some miserable garreteer, distinguished only by his poverty and learning)—and the next thing he does is to make a supercilious allusion to some one who is not so well dressed as himself. He then proceeds to give us a sparkling account of his Champagne and of his box at the Opera. A newspaper hack of this description also takes care to inform us that the people at the Opera in general, the Mr. Smiths and the Mr. Browns, are not good enough for him, and that he shall wait to begin his critical lucubrations till the stars of fashion meet there in crowds and constellations! At present it should seem that a seat on Parnassus conveys a title to a box at the Opera, and that Helicon no longer runs water, but Champagne. Literature, so far from supplying us with intellectual resources to counterbalance immediate privations, is made an instrument to add to our impatience and irritability under them, and to nourish our feverish, childish admiration of external show and grandeur. This rage for fashion and for fashionable writing seems becoming universal, and some stop must be put to it, unless it cures itself by its own excessive folly and insipidity. . . .

[*Sketches and Essays* (*now first collected by his Son*)—1839. This volume consists of Essays contributed to various periodicals, but not previously published in a collective form. It may be regarded as a continuation of *Table-Talk* and *The Plain Speaker*.]

ON READING NEW BOOKS.

"And what of this new book, that the whole world make such a rout about?"—STERNE.

I CANNOT understand the rage manifested by the greater part of the world for reading New Books. If the public had read all those that have gone before, I can conceive how they should not wish to read the same work twice over; but when I consider the countless volumes that lie unopened, unregarded, unread, and unthought of, I cannot enter into the pathetic complaints that I hear made that

Sir Walter writes no more—that the press is idle—that Lord Byron is dead. If I have not read a book before, it is, to all intents and purposes, new to me, whether it was printed yesterday or three hundred years ago. If it be urged that it has no modern, passing incidents, and is out of date and old-fashioned, then it is so much the newer; it is farther removed from other works that I have lately read, from the familiar routine of ordinary life, and makes so much more addition to my knowledge. But many people would as soon think of putting on old armour as of taking up a book not published within the last month, or year at the utmost. There is a fashion in reading as well as in dress, which lasts only for the season. One would imagine that books were, like women, the worse for being old; that they have a pleasure in being read for the first time; that they open their leaves more cordially; that the spirit of enjoyment wears out with the spirit of novelty; and that, after a certain age, it is high time to put them on the shelf. This conceit seems to be followed up in practice. What is it to me that another—that hundreds or thousands have in all ages read a work? Is it on this account the less likely to give me pleasure, because it has delighted so many others? Or can I taste this pleasure by proxy? Or am I in any degree the wiser for their knowledge? Yet this might appear to be the inference. *Their* having read the work may be said to act upon us by sympathy, and the knowledge which so many other persons have of its contents deadens our curiosity and interest altogether. We set aside the subject as one on which others have made up their minds for us (as if we really could have ideas in their heads), and are quite on the alert for the next new work, teeming hot from the press, which we shall be the first to read, criticise, and pass an opinion on. Oh, delightful! To cut open the leaves, to inhale the fragrance of the scarcely dry paper, to examine the type to see who is the printer (which is some clue to the value that is set upon the work), to launch out into regions of thought and invention never trod till now, and to explore characters that never met a human eye before—this is a luxury worth sacrificing a dinner-party or a few hours of a spare morning to. Who, indeed, when the work is critical and full of expectation, would venture to dine out, or to face a coterie of blue-stockings in the evening, without having gone through his ordeal, or at least without hastily turning over a few of the first pages, while dressing, to be able to say that the beginning does not promise much, or to tell the name of the heroine?

A new work is something in our power; we mount the bench, and sit in judgment on it; we can damn or recommend it to others at pleasure can decry or extol it to the skies and can give an answer

to those who have not yet read it and expect an account of it; and thus show our shrewdness and the independence of our taste before the world have had time to form an opinion. If we cannot write ourselves, we become, by busying ourselves about it, a kind of *accessories after the fact*. Though not the parent of the bantling that "has just come into this breathing world, scarce half made up," without the aid of criticism and puffing, yet we are the gossips and foster-nurses on the occasion, with all the mysterious significance and self-importance of the tribe. If we wait, we must take our report from others; if we make haste, we may dictate ours to them. It is not a race, then, for priority of information, but for precedence in tattling and dogmatising. The work last out is the first that people talk and inquire about. It is the subject on the *tapis*—the cause that is pending. It is the last candidate for success (other claims have been disposed of), and appeals for this success to us, and us alone. Our predecessors can have nothing to say to this question, however they may have anticipated us on others; future ages, in all probability, will not trouble their heads about it; we are the panel. How hard, then, not to avail ourselves of our immediate privilege to give sentence of life or death—to seem in ignorance of what every one else is full of—to be behindhand with the polite, the knowing, and fashionable part of mankind—to be at a loss and dumb-founded, when all around us are in their glory, and figuring away, on no other ground than that of having read a work that we have not! Books that are to be written hereafter cannot be criticised by us; those that were written formerly have been criticised long ago; but a new book is the property, the prey of ephemeral criticism, which it darts triumphantly upon; there is a raw, thin air of ignorance and uncertainty about it, not filled up by any recorded opinion; and curiosity, impertinence, and vanity rush eagerly into the vacuum. A new book is the fair field for petulance and coxcombry to gather laurels in—the butt set up for roving opinion to aim at. Can we wonder, then, that the circulating libraries are besieged by literary dowagers and their granddaughters when a new novel is announced? That mail-coach copies of the *Edinburgh Review* are or were coveted? That the manuscript of the Waverley Romances is sent abroad in time for the French, German, or even Italian translation to appear on the same day as the original work, so that the longing Continental public may not be kept waiting an instant longer than their fellow-readers in the English metropolis, which would be as tantalising and insupportable as a little girl being kept without her new frock, when her sister's is just come home and is the talk and admiration of every one in

the house? To be sure, there is something in the taste of the times; a modern work is expressly adapted to modern readers. It appeals to our direct experience, and to well-known subjects; it is part and parcel of the world around us, and is drawn from the same sources as our daily thoughts. There is, therefore, so far, a natural or habitual sympathy between us and the literature of the day, though this is a different consideration from the mere circumstance of novelty. An author now alive has a right to calculate upon the living public; he cannot count upon the dead, nor look forward with much confidence to those that are unborn. Neither, however, is it true that we are eager to read all new books alike; we turn from them with a certain feeling of distaste and distrust, unless they are recommended to us by some peculiar feature or obvious distinction. Only young ladies from the boarding-school or milliners' girls read all the new novels that come out. It must be spoken of or against; the writer's name must be well known or a great secret; it must be a topic of discourse and a mark for criticism—that is, it must be likely to bring us into notice in some way—or we take no notice of it. There is a mutual and tacit understanding on this head. We can no more read all the new books that appear than we can read all the old ones that have disappeared from time to time. A question may be started here, and pursued as far as needful, whether, if an old and worm-eaten manuscript were discovered at the present moment, it would be sought after with the same avidity as a new and hot-pressed poem or other popular work? Not generally, certainly, though by a few with perhaps greater zeal. For it would not affect present interests, or amuse present fancies, or touch on present manners, or fall in with the public *egotism* in any way; it would be the work either of some obscure author—in which case it would want the principle of excitement—or of some illustrious name, whose style and manner would be already familiar to those most versed in the subject, and his fame established; so that, as a matter of comment and controversy, it would only go to account on the old score; there would be no room for learned feuds and heart-burnings. . . .

I have been often struck by the unreasonableness of the complaint we constantly hear of the ignorance and barbarism of former ages, and the folly of restricting all refinement and literary elegance to our own. We are, indeed, indebted to the ages that have gone before us, and could not well do without them. But in all ages there will be found still others that have gone before with nearly equal lustre and advantage, though, by distance and the intervention of multiplied excellence, this lustre may be dimmed or forgotten. Had, it then, no existence? We might, with the same reason, sup-

pose that the horizon is the last boundary and verge of the round earth. Still, as we advance, it recedes from us; and so time from its storehouse pours out an endless succession of the productions of art and genius; and the farther we explore the obscurity, other trophies and other landmarks rise up. It is only our ignorance that fixes a limit—as the mist gathered round the mountain's brow makes us fancy we are treading the edge of the universe! Here was Eloise living at a period when monkish indolence and superstition were at their height—in one of those that are emphatically called the *dark ages;* and yet, as she is led to the altar to make her last fatal vow, expressing her feelings in language quite natural to her, but from which the most accomplished and heroic of our modern females would shrink back with pretty and affected wonder and affright. The glowing and impetuous lines which she murmured, as she passed on, with spontaneous and rising enthusiasm, were engraven on her heart, familiar to her as her daily thoughts; her mind must have been full of them to overflowing, and at the same time enriched with other stores and sources of knowledge equally elegant and impressive; and we persist, notwithstanding this and a thousand similar circumstances, in indulging our surprise how people could exist, and see, and feel, in those days, without having access to our opportunities and acquirements, and how Shakspeare wrote long after, *in a barbarous age!* The mystery in this case is of our own making. We are struck with astonishment at finding a fine moral sentiment or a noble image nervously expressed in an author of the age of Queen Elizabeth; not considering that, independently of nature and feeling, which are the same in all periods, the writers of that day, who were generally men of education and learning, had such models before them as the one that has been just referred to—were thoroughly acquainted with those masters of classic thought and language, compared with whom, in all that relates to the artificial graces of composition, the most studied of the moderns are little better than Goths and Vandals. It is true we have lost sight of and neglected the former, because the latter have, in a great degree, superseded them, as the elevations nearest to us intercept those farthest off; but our not availing ourselves of this vantage-ground is no reason why our forefathers should not (who had not our superfluity of choice), and most assuredly they did study and cherish the precious fragments of antiquity, collected together in their time, "like sunken wreck and sumless treasuries;"[1] and while they did this, we need be at no loss to account for any examples of grace, or force, or dignity in their writings, if these

[1] "Henry V.," i. 2 [Dyce's edit., 1868, iv. 429].

must always be traced back to a previous source. One age cannot understand how another could subsist without its lights, as one country thinks every other must be poor for want of its physical productions. This is a narrow and superficial view of the subject: we should by all means rise above it. I am not for devoting the whole of our time to the study of the classics, or of any other set of writers, to the exclusion and neglect of nature; but I think we should turn our thoughts enough that way to convince us of the existence of genius and learning before our time, and to cure us of an overweening conceit of ourselves, and of a contemptuous opinion of the world at large. Every civilised age and country (and of these there is not one, but a hundred) has its literature, its arts, its comforts, large and ample, though we may know nothing of them; nor is it (except for our own sakes) important that we should. . . .

CANT AND HYPOCRISY.

. . . THE hypocrisy of priests has been a butt for ridicule in all ages; but I am not sure that there has not been more wit than philosophy in it. A priest, it is true, is obliged to affect a greater degree of sanctity than ordinary men, and probably more than he possesses; and this is so far, I am willing to allow, hypocrisy and solemn grimace. But I cannot admit, that though he may exaggerate or even make an ostentatious display of religion and virtue through habit and spiritual pride, this is a proof he has not these sentiments in his heart, or that his whole behaviour is the mere acting of a part. His character, his motives, are not altogether pure and sincere: are they therefore all false and hollow? No such thing. It is contrary to all our observation and experience so to interpret it. We all wear some disguise—make some professions—use some artifice to set ourselves off as being better than we are; and yet it is not denied that we have some good intentions and praiseworthy qualities at bottom, though we may endeavour to keep some others that we think less to our credit as much as possible in the background;—why, then, should we not extend the same favourable construction to monks and priests, who may be sometimes caught tripping as well as other men—with less excuse, no doubt; but if it is also with greater remorse of conscience, which probably often happens, their pretensions are not all downright, barefaced imposture. Their sincerity, compared with that of other men, can only be judged of by the proportion between the degree of virtue they profess and that which they practise, or at least carefully seek to realise. To conceive it otherwise is to insist that characters must

be all perfect or all vicious—neither of which suppositions is even possible. . . . If a poor half-starved parish priest pays his court to an *olla podrida* or a venison pasty with uncommon gusto, shall we say that he has no other sentiments in offering his devotions to a crucifix, or in counting his beads? I see no more ground for such an inference than for affirming that Handel was not in earnest when he sat down to compose a Symphony, because he had at the same time, perhaps, a bottle of cordials in his cupboard; or that Raphael was not entitled to the epithet of *divine*, because he was attached to the Fornarina. Everything has its turn in this chequered scene of things, unless we prevent it from taking its turn by over-rigid conditions, or drive men to despair or the most callous effrontery, by erecting a standard of perfection to which no one can conform in reality. . . .

It has been frequently remarked that the most obstinate heretic or confirmed sceptic, witnessing the service of the Roman Catholic Church, the elevation of the host amidst the sounds of music, the pomp of ceremonies, the embellishments of art, feels himself spell-bound, and is almost persuaded to become a renegade to his reason or his religion. Even in hearing a vespers chanted on the stage, or in reading an account of a torchlight procession in a romance, a superstitious awe creeps over the frame, and we are momentarily charmed out of ourselves. When such is the obvious and involuntary influence of circumstances on the imagination, shall we say that a monkish recluse, surrounded from his childhood by all this pomp, a stranger to any other faith, who has breathed no other atmosphere, and all whose meditations are bent on this one subject both by interest and habit and duty, is to be set down as a rank and heartless mountebank in the professions he makes of belief in it, because his thoughts may sometimes wander to forbidden subjects, or his feet stumble on forbidden ground? Or shall not the deep shadows of the woods in Vallombrosa enhance the solemnity of this feeling, or the icy horrors of the Grand Chartreux add to its elevation and its purity? To argue otherwise is to misdeem of human nature, and to limit its capacities for good or evil by some narrow-minded standard of our own. Man is neither a god nor a brute; but there is a prosaic and a poetical side to everything concerning him, and it is as impossible absolutely and for a constancy to exclude either one or the other from the mind, as to make him live without air or food. The *ideal*, the empire of thought and aspiration after truth and good, is inseparable from the nature of an intellectual being—what right have we, then, to catch at every strife which in the mortified professors of religion the spirit wages with the flesh as grossly vicious? or at every doubt, the bare sugges-

tion of which fills them with consternation and despair, as a proof of the most glaring hypocrisy? The grossnesses of religion and its stickling for mere forms as its essence have given a handle, and a just one, to its impugners. At the feast of Ramadan (says Voltaire) the Mussulmans wash and pray five times a day, and then fall to cutting one another's throats again with the greatest deliberation and good-will. The two things, I grant, are sufficiently at variance; but they are, I contend, equally sincere in both. The Mahometans are savages, but they are not the less true believers—they hate their enemies as heartily as they revere the Koran. This, instead of showing the fallacy of the *ideal* principle, shows its universality and indestructible essence. Let a man be as bad as he will, as little refined as possible, and indulge whatever hurtful passions or gross vices he thinks proper, these cannot occupy the whole of his time; and in the intervals between one scoundrel action and another he may, and must, have better thoughts, and may have recourse to those of religion (true or false) among the number, without in this being guilty of hypocrisy or of making a jest of what is considered as sacred. This, I take it, is the whole secret of Methodism, which is a sort of modern vent for the ebullitions of the spirit through the gaps of unrighteousness.

We often see that a person condemns in another the very thing he is guilty of himself. Is this hypocrisy? It may, or it may not. If he really feels none of the disgust and abhorrence he expresses, this is quackery and impudence. But if he really expresses what he feels (and he easily may, for it is the abstract idea he contemplates in the case of another, and the immediate temptation to which he yields in his own, so that he probably is not even conscious of the identity or connection between the two), then this is not hypocrisy, but want of strength and keeping in the moral sense. All morality consists in squaring our actions and sentiments to our ideas of what is fit and proper; and it is the incessant struggle and alternate triumph of the two principles, the *ideal* and the physical, that keeps up this "mighty coil and pudder" about vice and virtue, and is one great source of all the good and evil in the world. The mind of man is like a clock that is always running down, and requires to be as constantly wound up. The *ideal* principle is the master-key that winds it up, and without which it would come to a stand: the sensual and selfish feelings are the dead weights that pull it down to the gross and grovelling. Till the intellectual faculty is destroyed (so that the mind sees nothing beyond itself or the present moment), it is impossible to have all brutal depravity; till the material and physical are done away with (so that it shall contemplate every-

thing from a purely spiritual and disinterested point of view), it is impossible to have all virtue. There must be a mixture of the two, as long as man is compounded of opposite materials, a contradiction and an eternal competition for the mastery. I by no means think a single bad action condemns a man, for he probably condemns it as much as you do; nor a single bad habit, for he is probably trying all his life to get rid of it. A man is only thoroughly profligate when he has lost the sense of right and wrong; or a thorough hypocrite when he has not even the wish to be what he appears. The greatest offence against virtue is to speak ill of it. To recommend certain things is worse than to practise them. There may be an excuse for the last in the frailty of passion; but the former can arise from nothing but an utter depravity of disposition. Any one may yield to temptation, and yet feel a sincere love and aspiration after virtue; but he who maintains vice in theory has not even the conception or capacity for virtue in his mind. Men err: fiends only make a mock at goodness. . . .

If goodness were only a theory, it were a pity it should be lost to the world. There are a number of things the idea of which is a clear gain to the mind. Let people, for instance, rail at friendship, genius, freedom, as long as they will—the very names of these despised qualities are better than anything else that could be substituted for them, and embalm even the most envenomed satire against them. It is no small consideration that the mind is capable even of feigning such things. So I would contend against that reasoning which would have it thought that if religion is not true, there is no difference between mankind and the beasts that perish;—I should say that this distinction is equally proved if religion is supposed to be a mere fabrication of the human mind; the capacity to conceive it makes the difference. The idea alone of an overruling Providence, or of a future state, is as much a distinctive mark of a superiority of nature as the invention of the mathematics, which are true—or of poetry, which is a fable. Whatever the truth or falsehood of our speculations, the power to make them is peculiar to ourselves. . . .

Thus, though I think there is very little downright hypocrisy in the world, I do think there is a great deal of *cant*—"cant religious, cant political, cant literary," &c., as Lord Byron said. Though few people have the face to set up for the very thing they in their hearts despise, we almost all want to be thought better than we are, and affect a greater admiration or abhorrence of certain things than we really feel. Indeed, some degree of affectation is as necessary to the mind as dress is to the body; we must overact our part in some measure, in order to produce any effect at all. There was formerly

the two hours' sermon, the long-winded grace, the nasal drawl, the uplifted hands and eyes; all which, though accompanied with some corresponding emotion, expressed more than was really felt, and were in fact intended to make up for the conscious deficiency. As our interest in anything wears out with time and habit, we exaggerate the outward symptoms of zeal as mechanical helps to devotion, dwell the longer on our words as they are less felt, and hence the very origin of the term, *cant*. The cant of sentimentality has succeeded to that of religion. There is a cant of humanity, of patriotism and loyalty—not that people do not feel these emotions, but they make too great a *fuss* about them, and drawl out the expression of them till they tire themselves and others. There is a cant about Shakspeare. There is a cant about *Political Economy* just now. In short, there is and must be a cant about everything that excites a considerable degree of attention and interest, and that people would be thought to know and care rather more about them than they actually do. Cant is the voluntary overcharging or prolongation of a real sentiment; hypocrisy is the setting up a pretension to a feeling you never had and have no wish for. There are people who are made up of *cant*, that is, of mawkish affectation and sensibility, but who have not sincerity enough to be *hypocrites*, that is, have not hearty dislike or contempt enough for anything, to give the lie to their puling professions of admiration and esteem for it.

WALTON'S "COMPLETE ANGLER."

[From the Essay, "Merry England."]

. . . I SHOULD suppose no other language than ours can show such a book as an often-mentioned one, Walton's "Complete Angler"—so full of *naïveté*, of unaffected sprightliness, of busy trifling, of dainty songs, of refreshing brooks, of shady arbours, of happy thoughts, and of the herb called *Heart's Ease!* Some persons can see neither the wit nor wisdom of this genuine volume, as if a book as well as a man might not have a personal character belonging to it, amiable, venerable from the spirit of joy and thorough goodness it manifests, independently of acute remarks or scientific discoveries; others object to the cruelty of Walton's theory and practice of trout-fishing—for my part, I should as soon charge an infant with cruelty for killing a fly, and I feel the same sort of pleasure in reading his book as I should have done in the company of this happy, child-like old man, watching his ruddy cheek, his laughing eye, the kindness of his heart, and the dexterity of his hand in seizing his finny prey! . . .

ON A SUN-DIAL.

. . . Surely, if there is anything with which we should not mix up our vanity and self-consequence, it is with Time, the most independent of all things. All the sublimity, all the superstition, that hang upon this palpable mode of announcing its flight are chiefly attached to this circumstance. Time would lose its abstracted character, if we kept it like a curiosity or a jack-in-a-box: its prophetic warnings would have no effect, if it obviously spoke only at our prompting like a paltry ventriloquism. The clock that tells the coming, dreaded hour—the castle bell, that "with its brazen throat and iron tongue, sounds *one* unto the drowsy ear of night"—the curfew, "swinging slow with sullen roar" o'er wizard stream or fountain, are like a voice from other worlds, big with unknown events. The last sound, which is still kept up as an old custom in many parts of England, is a great favourite with me. I used to hear it when a boy. It tells a tale of other times. The days that are past, the generations that are gone, the tangled forest glades and hamlets brown of my native country, the woodsman's art, the Norman warrior armed for the battle or in his festive hall, the conqueror's iron rule and peasant's lamp extinguished, all start up at the clamorous peal, and fill my mind with fear and wonder. I confess, nothing at present interests me but what has been—the recollection of the impressions of my early life, or events long past, of which only the dim traces remain in a mouldering ruin or half-obsolete custom. That *things should be that are now no more*, creates in my mind the most unfeigned astonishment. I cannot solve the mystery of the past, nor exhaust my pleasure in it. The years, the generations to come, are nothing to me. We care no more about the world in the year 2300 than we do about one of the planets. We might as well make a voyage to the moon as think of stealing a march upon Time with impunity. *De non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio.* Those who are to come after us and push us from the stage seem like upstarts and pretenders, that may be said to exist *in vacuo*, we know not upon what, except as they are blown up with vanity and self-conceit by their patrons among the moderns. But the ancients are true and *bond fide* people, to whom we are bound by aggregate knowledge and filial ties, and in whom, seen by the mellow light of history, we feel our own existence doubled and our pride consoled, as we ruminate on the vestiges of the past. The public in general, however, do not carry this specu-

lative indifference about the future to what is to happen to themselves, or to the part they are to act in the busy scene. For my own part, I do; and the only wish I can form, or that ever prompts the passing sigh, would be to live some of my years over again—they would be those in which I enjoyed and suffered most! . . .

For myself, I have never had a watch nor any other mode of keeping time in my possession, nor ever wish to learn how time goes. It is a sign I have had little to do, few avocations, few engagements. When I am in a town, I can hear the clock; and when I am in the country, I can listen to the silence. What I like best is to lie whole mornings on a sunny bank on Salisbury Plain, without any object before me, neither knowing nor caring how time passes, and thus "with light-winged toys of feathered Idleness" to melt down hours to moments. Perhaps some such thoughts as I have here set down float before me like motes before my half-shut eyes, or some vivid image of the past by forcible contrast rushes by me—"Diana and her fawn, and all the glories of the antique world;" then I start away to prevent the iron from entering my soul, and let fall some tears into that stream of time which separates me farther and farther from all I once loved! At length I rouse myself from my reverie, and home to dinner, proud of killing time with thought, nay, even without thinking. Somewhat of this idle humour I inherit from my father, though he had not the same freedom from *ennui*, for he was not a metaphysician; and there were stops and vacant intervals in his being which he did not know how to fill up. He used in these cases, and as an obvious resource, carefully to wind up his watch at night, and "with lack-lustre eye" more than once in the course of the day look to see what o'clock it was. Yet he had nothing else in his character in common with the elder Mr. Shandy.

ON PREJUDICE.

Prejudice, in its ordinary and literal sense, is *prejudging* any question without having sufficiently examined it, and adhering to our opinion upon it through ignorance, malice, or perversity, in spite of every evidence to the contrary. The little that we know has a strong alloy of misgiving and uncertainty in it; the mass of things of which we have no means of judging, but of which we form a blind and confident opinion, as if we were thoroughly acquainted with them, is monstrous. Prejudice is the child of ignorance; for as our actual knowledge falls short of our desire to know, or curiosity and interest in the world about us, so must we be tempted to decide upon a

greater number of things at a venture; and having no check from reason or inquiry, we shall grow more obstinate and bigoted in our conclusions, according as we have been rash and presumptuous. The absence of proof, instead of suspending our judgment, only gives us an opportunity of making things out according to our wishes and fancies; mere ignorance is a blank canvas, on which we lay what colours we please, and paint objects black or white, as angels or devils, magnify or diminish them at our option; and in the *vacuum* either of facts or arguments, the weight of prejudice and passion falls with double force, and bears down everything before it. If we enlarge the circle of our previous knowledge ever so little, we may meet with something to create doubt and difficulty; but as long as we remain confined to the cell of our native ignorance, while we know nothing beyond the routine of sense and custom, we shall refer everything to that standard, or make it out as we would have it to be, like spoiled children who have never been from home, and expect to find nothing in the world that does not accord with their wishes and notions. It is evident that the fewer things we know, the more ready we shall be to pronounce upon and condemn what is new and strange to us; that is, the less capable we shall be of varying our conceptions, and the more prone to mistake a part for the whole. What we do not understand the meaning of must necessarily appear to us ridiculous and contemptible; and we do not stop to inquire, till we have been taught by repeated experiments and warnings of our own fallibility, whether the absurdity is in ourselves, or in the object of our dislike and scorn. The most ignorant people are rude and insolent, as the most barbarous are cruel and ferocious. All our knowledge at first lying in a narrow compass (crowded by local and physical causes), whatever does not conform to this shocks us as out of reason and nature. The less we look abroad, the more our ideas are introverted, and our habitual impressions, from being made up of a few particulars always repeated, grow together into a kind of concrete substance, which will not bear taking to pieces, and where the smallest deviation destroys the whole feeling. . . . This account of the concrete nature of prejudice, or of the manner in which our ideas by habit and the dearth of general information coalesce together into one indissoluble form, will show (what otherwise seems unaccountable) how such violent antipathies and animosities have been occasioned by the most ridiculous or trifling differences of opinion, or outward symbols of it; for by constant custom, and the want of reflection, the most insignificant of these was as inseparably bound up with the main principle as the most important, and to give up any part was to give up the whole essence and vital interests of

religion, morals, and government. Hence we see all sects and parties mutually insist on their own technical distinctions as the essentials and fundamentals of religion and politics, and for the slightest variation in any of these, unceremoniously attack their opponents as atheists and blasphemers, traitors and incendiaries. . . .

The most dangerous enemies to established opinions are those who, by always defending them, call attention to their weak sides. The priests and politicians, in former times, were therefore wise in preventing the first approaches of innovation and inquiry; in preserving inviolate the smallest link in the adamantine chain with which they had bound the souls and bodies of men; in closing up every avenue or pore through which a doubt could creep in, for they knew that through the slightest crevice floods of irreligion and heresy would rush like a tide. Hence the constant alarm at free discussion and inquiry: hence the clamour against innovation and reform: hence our dread and detestation of those who differ with us in opinion, for this at once puts us on the necessity of defending ourselves, or of owning ourselves weak or in the wrong, if we cannot; and converts that which was before a bed of roses, while we slept undisturbed upon it, into a cushion of thorns; and hence our natural tenaciousness of those points which are most vulnerable, and of which we have no proof to offer; for as reason fails us, we are more annoyed by the objections, and require to be soothed and supported by the concurrence of others. . . . The great stumbling-block to candour and liberality is the difficulty of being fully possessed of the excellence of any opinion or pursuits of our own, without proportionably condemning whatever is opposed to it; nor can we admit the possibility that when our side of the shield is black, the other should be white. The largest part of our judgments is prompted by habit and passion; but because habit is like a second nature, and we necessarily approve what passion suggests, we will have it that they are founded entirely on reason and nature, and that all the world must be of the same opinion, unless they wilfully shut their eyes to the truth. Animals are free from prejudice, because they have no notion or care about anything beyond themselves, and have no wish to generalise or talk big on what does not concern them: man alone falls into absurdity and error by setting up a claim to superior wisdom and virtue, and to be a dictator and lawgiver to all around him, and on all things that he has the remotest conception of. . . . Those who think they can *make a clear stage of it*, and frame a set of opinions on all subjects by an appeal to reason alone, and without the smallest intermixture of custom, imagination, or passion, know

just as little of themselves as they do of human nature. The best way to prevent our running into the wildest excesses of prejudice and the most dangerous aberrations from reason is, not to represent the two things as having a great gulf between them, which it is impossible to pass without a violent effort, but to show that we are constantly (even when we think ourselves most secure) treading on the brink of a precipice; that custom, passion, imagination, insinuate themselves into and influence almost every judgment we pass or sentiment we indulge, and are a necessary help (as well as hindrance) to the human understanding; and that to attempt to refer every question to abstract truth and precise definition, without allowing for the frailty of prejudice, which is the unavoidable consequence of the frailty and imperfection of reason, would be to unravel the whole web and texture of human understanding and society. Such daring anatomists of morals and philosophy think that the whole beauty of the mind consists in the skeleton; cut away, without remorse, all sentiment, fancy, taste, as superfluous excrescences; and in their own eager, unfeeling pursuit of scientific truth and elementary principles, they "murder to dissect."

It is a mistake, however, to suppose that all prejudices are false, though it is not an easy matter to distinguish between true and false prejudice. Prejudice is properly an opinion or feeling, not for which there is no reason, but of which we cannot render a satisfactory account on the spot. It is not always possible to assign a "reason for the faith that is in us," not even if we take time and summon up all our strength; but it does not therefore follow that our faith is hollow and unfounded. A false impression may be defined to be an effect without a cause, or without any adequate one; but the effect may remain and be true, though the cause is concealed or forgotten. The grounds of our opinions and tastes may be deep, and be scattered over a large surface; they may be various, remote, and complicated; but the result will be sound and true, if they have existed at all, though we may not be able to analyse them into classes, or to recall the particular time, place, and circumstances of each individual case or branch of the evidence. The materials of thought and feeling, the body of facts and experience, are infinite, are constantly going on around us, and acting to produce an impression of good or evil, of assent or dissent to certain inferences; but to require that we should be prepared to retain the whole of this mass of experience in our memory, to resolve it into its component parts, and be able to quote chapter and verse for every conclusion we unavoidably draw from it, or else to discard the whole together as unworthy the attention of a rational being, is to betray an utter

ignorance both of the limits and the several uses of the human capacity. The *feeling* of the truth of anything, or the soundness of the judgment formed upon it from repeated, actual impressions, is one thing; the power of vindicating and enforcing it, by distinctly appealing to or explaining those impressions, is another. The most fluent talkers or most plausible reasoners are not always the justest thinkers. . . .

ON DISAGREEABLE PEOPLE.

Those people who are uncomfortable in themselves are disagreeable to others. I do not here mean to speak of persons who offend intentionally, or are obnoxious to dislike from some palpable defect of mind or body, ugliness, pride, ill-humour, &c.; but of those who are disagreeable in spite of themselves, and, as it might appear, with almost every qualification to recommend them to others. This want of success is owing chiefly to something in what is called their manner; and this again has its foundation in a certain cross-grained and unsociable state of feeling on their part, which influences us, perhaps, without our distinctly adverting to it. The mind is a finer instrument than we sometimes suppose it, and is not only swayed by overt acts and tangible proofs, but has an instinctive feeling of the air of truth. We find many individuals in whose company we pass our time, and have no particular fault to find with their understandings or character, and yet we are never thoroughly satisfied with them: the reason will turn out to be, upon examination, that they are never thoroughly satisfied with themselves, but uneasy and out of sorts all the time; and this makes us uneasy with them, without our reflecting on or being able to discover the cause.

Thus, for instance, we meet with persons who do us a number of kindnesses, who show us every mark of respect and good-will, who are friendly and serviceable—and yet we do not feel grateful to them, after all. We reproach ourselves with this as caprice or insensibility, and try to get the better of it; but there is something in their way of doing things that prevents us from feeling cordial or sincerely obliged to them. We think them very worthy people, and would be glad of an opportunity to do them a good turn if it were in our power; but we cannot get beyond this: the utmost we can do is to save appearances, and not come to an open rupture with them. The truth is, in all such cases, we do not sympathise (as we ought) with them, because they do not sympathise (as they ought) with us. They have done what they did from a sense of duty in a cold, dry manner, or from a meddlesome, busybody humour; or to

show their superiority over us, or to patronise our infirmity; or they have dropped some hint by the way, or blundered upon some topic they should not, and have shown, by one means or other, that they were occupied with anything but the pleasure they were affording us, or a delicate attention to our feelings. Such persons may be styled *friendly grievances*. They are commonly people of low spirits and disappointed views, who see the discouraging side of human life, and, with the best intentions in the world, contrive to make everything they have to do with uncomfortable. They are alive to your distress, and take pains to remove it; but they have no satisfaction in the gaiety and ease they have communicated, and are on the *look-out* for some new occasion of signalising their zeal; nor are they backward to insinuate that you will soon have need of their assistance, to guard you against running into fresh difficulties, or extricate you from them. From large benevolence of soul and "discourse of reason, looking before and after," they are continually reminding you of something that has gone wrong in time past, or to that may do so in that which is to come, and are surprised that their awkward hints, sly innuendos, blunt questions, and solemn features do not excite all the complacency and mutual good understanding in you which it is intended that they should. When they make themselves miserable on your account, it is hard that you will not lend them your countenance and support. This deplorable humour of theirs does not hit any one else. They are useful but not agreeable people; they may assist you in your affairs, but they depress and tyrannise over your feelings. When they have made you happy, they will not let you be so—have no enjoyment of the good they have done—will on no account part with their melancholy and desponding tone—and, by their mawkish insensibility and doleful grimaces, throw a damp over the triumph they are called upon to celebrate. They would keep you in hot water, that they may help you out of it. They will nurse you in a fit of sickness (congenial sufferers!)—arbitrate a law-suit for you, and embroil you deeper—procure you a loan of money;—but all the while they are only delighted with rubbing the sore place, and casting the colour of your mental or other disorders. "The whole need not a physician;" and, being once placed at ease and comfort, they have no further use for you as subjects for their singular beneficence, and you are not sorry to be quit of their tiresome interference. The old proverb, *A friend in need is a friend indeed*, is not verified in them. The class of persons here spoken of are the very reverse of *summer-friends*, who court you in prosperity, flatter your vanity, are the humble servants of your follies, never see or allude to anything

wrong, minister to your gaiety, smooth over every difficulty, and, with the slightest approach of misfortune or of anything unpleasant, take French leave—

> "As when, in prime of June, a burnish'd fly
> Sprung from the meads, o'er which he sweeps along,
> Cheer'd by the breathing bloom and vital sky,
> Tunes up, amid these airy halls, his song,
> Soothing at first the gay reposing throng;
> And oft he sips their bowl, or, nearly drown'd,
> He thence recovering drives their beds among,
> And scares their tender sleep with trump profound;
> Then out again he flies, to wing his mazy round."

However we may despise such triflers, yet we regret them more than those well-meaning friends on whom a dull melancholy vapour hangs, that drags them and every one about them to the ground. . . .

There are persons who cannot make friends. Who are they? Those who cannot be friends. It is not the want of understanding or good-nature, of entertaining or useful qualities, that you complain of: on the contrary, they have probably many points of attraction; but they have one that neutralises all these—they care nothing about you, and are neither the better nor worse for what you think of them. They manifest no joy at your approach; and when you leave them, it is with a feeling that they can do just as well without you. This is not sullenness, nor indifference, nor absence of mind; but they are intent solely on their own thoughts, and you are merely one of the subjects they exercise them upon. They live in society as in a solitude; and, however their brain works, their pulse beats neither faster nor slower for the common accidents of life. There is, therefore, something cold and repulsive in the air that is about them—like that of marble. In a word, they are *modern philosophers;* and the modern philosopher is what the pedant was of old—a being who lives in a world of his own, and has no correspondence with this. It is not that such persons have not done you services—you acknowledge it; it is not that they have said severe things of you—you submit to it as a necessary evil: but it is the cool manner in which the whole is done that annoys you—the speculating upon you, as if you were nobody—the regarding you, with a view to an experiment *in corpore vili*—the principle of dissection—the determination to spare no blemishes—to cut you down to your real standard;—in short, the utter absence of the partiality of friendship, the blind enthusiasm of affection, or the delicacy of common decency, that whether they "hew you as a carcass fit for hounds, or carve you as a dish fit for the gods," the operation on your feelings and your

sense of obligation is just the same; and, whether they are demons or angels in themselves, you wish them equally *at the devil!* . . .

To please universally, we must be pleased with ourselves and others. There should be a tinge of the coxcomb, an oil of self-complacency, an anticipation of success—there should be no gloom, no moroseness, no shyness—in short, there should be very little of the Englishman, and a good deal of the Frenchman. But though, I believe, this is the receipt, we are none the nearer making use of it. It is impossible for those who are naturally disagreeable ever to become otherwise. This is some consolation, as it may save a world of useless pains and anxiety. "*Desire to please, and you will infallibly please,*" is a true maxim; but it does not follow that it is in the power of all to practise it. A vain man, who thinks he is endeavouring to please, is only endeavouring to shine, and is still farther from the mark. An irritable man, who puts a check upon himself, only grows dull, and loses spirit to be anything. Good temper and a happy turn of mind (which are the indispensable requisites) can no more be commanded than good health or good looks; and though the plain and sickly need not distort their features, and may abstain from excess, this is all they can do. The utmost a disagreeable person can do is to hope, by care and study, to become less disagreeable than he is, and to pass unnoticed in society. With this negative character he should be contented, and may build his fame and happiness on other things. . . .

SENSIBILITY TO REAL EXCELLENCE.

[From the Essay, "On Taste."]

. . . To be dazzled by admiration of the greatest excellence, and of the highest works of genius, is natural to the best capacities and the best natures; envy and dulness are most apt to detect minute blemishes and unavoidable inequalities, as we see the spots in the sun by having its rays blunted by mist or smoke. It may be asked, then, whether mere extravagance and enthusiasm are proofs of taste. And I answer, no; where they are without reason and knowledge. Mere sensibility is not true taste, but sensibility to real excellence is. To admire and be wrapt up in what is trifling or absurd, is a proof of nothing but ignorance or affectation: on the contrary, he who admires most what is most worthy of admiration (let his raptures or his eagerness to express them be what they may) shows himself neither extravagant nor unwise. . . .

The highest taste is shown in habitual sensibility to the greatest

beauties; the most general taste is shown in a perception of the greatest variety of excellence. Many people admire Milton, and as many admire Pope, while there are but few who have any relish for both. Almost all the disputes on this subject arise, not so much from false as from confined taste. We suppose that only one thing can have merit; and that, if we allow it to anything else, we deprive the favourite object of our critical faith of the honours due to it. We are generally right in what we approve ourselves, for liking proceeds from a certain conformity of objects to the taste; as we are generally wrong in condemning what others admire, for our dislike mostly proceeds from a want of taste for what pleases them. Our being totally senseless to what excites extreme delight in those who have as good a right to judge as we have, in all human probability, implies a defect of faculty in us rather than a limitation in the resources of nature or art. Those who are pleased with the fewest things, know the least; as those who are pleased with everything, know nothing. . . .

[*Winterslow; Essays and Characters written there*, 1850. This volume is a further collection, by his son, of miscellaneous essays, contributed by Hazlitt to various periodicals. The title is taken from the name of a village near Salisbury Plain, to a roadside inn near which he used frequently to resort. See Memoir p. xxxi.; and Selections, p. 182.]

MY FIRST ACQUAINTANCE WITH POETS.

[The original germ of this memorable essay, considered by some of Hazlitt's critics the best he ever wrote, first made its appearance in the "Examiner" in 1817, in the form of a short letter. This was reprinted in *Political Essays*, 1819. A few years later (1823) it appeared in its present extended form in "The Liberal," where it occupied 24 pages.]

My father was a Dissenting minister at Wem, in Shropshire; and in the year 1798 Mr. Coleridge came to Shrewsbury, to succeed Mr. Rowe in the spiritual charge of a Unitarian congregation there. He did not come till late on the Saturday afternoon before he was to preach; and Mr. Rowe, who himself went down to the coach, in a state of anxiety and expectation, to look for the arrival of his successor, could find no one at all answering the description but a round-faced man, in a short black coat (like a shooting-jacket) which hardly seemed to have been made for him, but who seemed to be talking at a great rate

to his fellow-passengers. Mr. Rowe had scarce returned to give an account of his disappointment, when the round-faced man in black entered, and dissipated all doubts on the subject by beginning to talk. He did not cease while he stayed; nor has he since, that I know of. He held the good town of Shrewsbury in delightful suspense for three weeks that he remained there "fluttering the *proud Salopians,* like an eagle in a dove-cote;" and the Welsh mountains that skirt the horizon with their tempestuous confusion agree to have heard no such mystic sounds since the days of

"High-born Hoel's harp or soft Llewellyn's lay."

As we passed along between Wem and Shrewsbury, and I eyed their blue tops seen through the wintry branches, or the red rustling leaves of the sturdy oak-trees by the roadside, a sound was in my ears as of a Syren's song; I was stunned, startled with it, as from deep sleep; but I had no notion then that I should ever be able to express my admiration to others in motley imagery or quaint allusion, till the light of his genius shone into my soul, like the sun's rays glittering in the puddles of the road. I was at that time dumb, inarticulate, helpless, like a worm by the wayside, crushed, bleeding, lifeless; but now, bursting the deadly bands that "bound them,

"With Styx nine times round them,"

my ideas float on winged words, and as they expand their plumes, catch the golden light of other years. My soul has indeed remained in its original bondage, dark, obscure, with longings infinite and unsatisfied; my heart, shut up in the prison-house of this rude clay, has never found, nor will it ever find, a heart to speak to; but that my understanding also did not remain dumb and brutish, or at length found a language to express itself, I owe to Coleridge. But this is not to my purpose.

My father lived ten miles from Shrewsbury, and was in the habit of exchanging visits with Mr. Rowe, and with Mr. Jenkins of Whitchurch, nine miles farther on, according to the custom of Dissenting ministers in each other's neighbourhood. A line of communication is thus established, by which the flame of civil and religious liberty is kept alive, and nourishes its smouldering fire unquenchable, like the fires in the "Agamemnon" of Æschylus, placed at different stations, that waited for ten long years to announce with their blazing pyramids the destruction of Troy. Coleridge had agreed to come over and see my father, according to the courtesy of the country, as Mr. Rowe's probable successor; but in

the meantime, I had gone to hear him preach the Sunday after his arrival. A poet and a philosopher getting up into a Unitarian pulpit to preach the gospel was a romance in these degenerate days, a sort of revival of the primitive spirit of Christianity, which was not to be resisted.

It was in January of 1798 that I rose one morning before daylight, to walk ten miles in the mud, to hear this celebrated person preach. Never, the longest day I have to live, shall I have such another walk as this cold, raw, comfortless one, in the winter of the year 1798. *Il y a des impressions que ni le tems ni les circonstances peuvent effacer. Dusse-je vivre des siècles entiers, le doux tems de ma jeunesse ne peut renaître pour moi, ni s'effacer jamais dans ma memoire.* When I got there, the organ was playing the 100th Psalm, and when it was done, Mr. Coleridge rose and gave out his text: "And he went up into the mountain to pray, HIMSELF, ALONE." As he gave out this text, his voice "rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes;" and when he came to the two last words, which he pronounced loud, deep, and distinct, it seemed to me, who was then young, as if the sounds had echoed from the bottom of the human heart, and as if that prayer might have floated in solemn silence through the universe. The idea of St. John came into my mind, "of one crying in the wilderness, who had his loins girt about, and whose food was locusts and wild honey." The preacher then launched into his subject, like an eagle dallying with the wind. The sermon was upon peace and war; upon Church and State—not their alliance, but their separation—on the spirit of the world and the spirit of Christianity, not as the same, but as opposed to one another. He talked of those who had "inscribed the cross of Christ on banners dripping with human gore." He made a poetical and pastoral excursion—and to show the fatal effects of war, drew a striking contrast between the simple shepherd-boy, driving his team afield, or sitting under the hawthorn, piping to his flock, "as though he should never be old," and the same poor country lad, crimped, kidnapped, brought into town, made drunk at an ale-house, turned into a wretched drummer-boy, with his hair sticking on end with powder and pomatum, a long cue at his back, and tricked out in the loathsome finery of the profession of blood:

"Such were the notes our once-loved poet sung."

And for myself, I could not have been more delighted if I had heard the music of the spheres. Poetry and Philosophy had met together. Truth and Genius had embraced, under the eye and with the sanction of Religion. This was even beyond my hopes. I returned

home well satisfied. The sun, that was still labouring pale and wan through the sky, obscured by thick mists, seemed an emblem of the *good cause;* and the cold dank drops of dew, that hung half-melted on the beard of the thistle, had something genial and refreshing in them; for there was a spirit of hope and youth in all nature, that turned everything into good. The face of nature had not then the brand of JUS DIVINUM on it:

"Like to that sanguine flower inscrib'd with woe."

On the Tuesday following, the half-inspired speaker came. I was called down into the room where he was, and went half-hoping, half-afraid. He received me very graciously, and I listened for a long time without uttering a word. I did not suffer in his opinion by my silence. "For those two hours," he afterwards was pleased to say, "he was conversing with William Hazlitt's forehead!" His appearance was different from what I had anticipated from seeing him before. At a distance, and in the dim light of the chapel, there was to me a strange wildness in his aspect, a dusky obscurity, and I thought him pitted with the small-pox. His complexion was at that time clear, and even bright—

"As are the children of yon azure sheen."

His forehead was broad and high, light as if built of ivory, with large projecting eyebrows, and his eyes rolling beneath them, like a sea with darkened lustre. "A certain tender bloom his face o'erspread," a purple tinge as we see it in the pale, thoughtful complexions of the Spanish portrait-painters, Murillo and Valasquez. His mouth was gross, voluptuous, open, eloquent; his chin good-humoured and round; but his nose, the rudder of the face, the index of the will, was small, feeble, nothing—like what he has done. It might seem that the genius of his face as from a height surveyed and projected him (with sufficient capacity and huge aspiration) into the world unknown of thought and imagination, with nothing to support or guide his veering purpose, as if Columbus had launched his adventurous course for the New World in a scallop, without oars or compass. So, at least, I comment on it after the event. Coleridge, in his person, was rather above the common size, inclining to the corpulent, or, like Lord Hamlet, "somewhat fat and pursy." His hair (now, alas! grey) was then black and glossy as the raven's, and fell in smooth masses over his forehead. This long pendulous hair is peculiar to enthusiasts, to those whose minds tend heaven-ward; and is traditionally inseparable (though of a different colour) from the pictures of Christ. It ought to belong, as a character, to

all who preach *Christ crucified*, and Coleridge was at that time one of those!

It was curious to observe the contrast between him and my father, who was a veteran in the cause, and then declining into the vale of years. He had been a poor Irish lad, carefully brought up by his parents, and sent to the University of Glasgow (where he studied under Adam Smith) to prepare him for his future destination. It was his mother's proudest wish to see her son a Dissenting minister. So, if we look back to past generations (as far as eye can reach), we see the same hopes, fears, wishes, followed by the same disappointments, throbbing in the human heart; and so we may see them (if we look forward) rising up for ever, and disappearing, like vapourish bubbles, in the human breast! After being tossed about from congregation to congregation in the heats of the Unitarian controversy and squabbles about the American war, he had been relegated to an obscure village, where he was to spend the last thirty years of his life, far from the only converse that he loved, the talk about disputed texts of Scripture, and the cause of civil and religious liberty. Here he passed his days, repining, but resigned, in the study of the Bible and the perusal of the Commentators—huge folios, not easily got through, one of which would outlast a winter! Why did he pore on these from morn to night (with the exception of a walk in the fields or a turn in the garden to gather broccoli-plants or kidney beans of his own rearing, with no small degree of pride and pleasure)? Here were "no figures nor no fantasies"—neither poetry nor philosophy—nothing to dazzle, nothing to excite modern curiosity; but to his lack-lustre eyes there appeared within the pages of the ponderous, unwieldy, neglected tomes the sacred name of JEHOVAH in Hebrew capitals: pressed down by the weight of the style, worn to the last fading thinness of the understanding, there were glimpses, glimmering notions of the patriarchal wanderings, with palm-trees hovering in the horizon, and processions of camels at the distance of three thousand years; there was Moses with the Burning Bush, the number of the Twelve Tribes, types shadows, glosses on the law and the prophets; there were discussions (dull enough) on the age of Methuselah (a mighty speculation!) there were outlines, rude guesses at the shape of Noah's Ark and of the riches of Solomon's Temple; questions as to the date of the creation, predictions of the end of all things; the great lapses of time, the strange mutations of the globe, were unfolded with the voluminous leaf, as it turned over; and and though he soul might slumber with an hieroglyphic veil of inscrutable mysteries drawn over it, yet it was in a slumber ill exchanged for all the sharpened realities of sense, wit, fancy, or reason.

My father's life was comparatively a dream; but it was a dream of infinity and eternity, of death, the resurrection, and a judgment to come!

No two individuals were ever more unlike than were the host and his guest. A poet was to my father a sort of nondescript; yet whatever added grace to the Unitarian cause was to him welcome. He could hardly have been more surprised or pleased if our visitor had worn wings. Indeed, his thoughts had wings; and as the silken sounds rustled round our little wainscoted parlour, my father threw back his spectacles over his forehead, his white hairs mixing with its sanguine hue; and a smile of delight beamed across his rugged, cordial face, to think that Truth had found a new ally in Fancy![1] Besides, Coleridge seemed to take considerable notice of me, and that of itself was enough. He talked very familiarly, but agreeably, and glanced over a variety of subjects. At dinner-time he grew more animated, and dilated in a very edifying manner on Mary Wolstonecraft and Mackintosh. The last, he said, he considered (on my father's speaking of his "*Vindiciæ Gallicæ*" as a capital performance) as a clever, scholastic man—a master of the topics—or as the ready warehouseman of letters, who knew exactly where to lay his hand on what he wanted, though the goods were not his own. He thought him no match for Burke, either in style or matter. Burke was a metaphysician, Mackintosh a mere logician. Burke was an orator (almost a poet) who reasoned in figures, because he had an eye for nature: Mackintosh, on the other hand, was a rhetorician, who had only an eye to commonplaces. On this I ventured to say that I had always entertained a great opinion of Burke, and that (as far as I could find) the speaking of him with contempt might be made the test of a vulgar, democratical mind. This was the first observation I ever made to Coleridge, and he said it was a very just and striking one. I remember the leg of Welsh mutton and the turnips on the table that day had the finest flavour imaginable. Coleridge added that Mackintosh and Tom Wedgwood (of whom, however, he spoke highly) had expressed a very indifferent opinion of his friend Mr. Wordsworth, on which he remarked to them, "He strides on so far before you, that he dwindles in the distance!" Godwin had once boasted to him of having carried on an argument with Mackintosh for three hours with dubious success;

[1] My father was ono of those who mistook his talent, after all. He used to be very much dissatisfied that I preferred his "Letters" to his "Sermons." The last were foreed and dry; the first eame naturally from him. For ease, half-plays on words, and a supine, monkish, indolent pleasantry, I have never seen them equalled.

Coleridge told him, "If there had been a man of genius in the room he would have settled the question in five minutes." He asked me if I had ever seen Mary Wolstonecraft, and I said I had once for a few moments, and that she seemed to me to turn off Godwin's objections to something she advanced with quite a playful, easy air. He replied, that "this was only one instance of the ascendency which people of imagination exercised over those of mere intellect." He did not rate Godwin very high (this was caprice or prejudice, real or affected), but he had a great idea of Mrs. Wolstonecraft's powers of conversation; none at all of her talent for book-making. We talked a little about Holcroft. He had been asked if he was not much struck *with* him, and he said, he thought himself in more danger of being struck *by* him. I complained that he would not let me get on at all, for he required a definition of every the commonest word, exclaiming, "What do you mean by a *sensation*, sir? What do you mean by an *idea?*" This, Coleridge said, was barricadoing the road to truth; it was setting up a turnpike-gate at every step we took. I forget a great number of things, many more than I remember; but the day passed off pleasantly, and the next morning Mr. Coleridge was to return to Shrewsbury. When I came down to breakfast, I found that he had just received a letter from his friend, T. Wedgwood, making him an offer of £150 a year if he chose to waive his present pursuit, and devote himself entirely to the study of poetry and philosophy. Coleridge seemed to make up his mind to close with this proposal in the act of tying on one of his shoes. It threw an additional damp on his departure. It took the wayward enthusiast quite from us to cast him into Deva's winding vales, or by the shores of old romance. Instead of living at ten miles' distance, of being the pastor of a Dissenting congregation at Shrewsbury, he was henceforth to inhabit the Hill of Parnassus, to be a Shepherd on the Delectable Mountains. Alas! I knew not the way thither, and felt very little gratitude for Mr. Wedgwood's bounty. I was pleasantly relieved from this dilemma; for Mr. Coleridge, asking for a pen and ink, and going to a table to write something on a bit of card, advanced towards me with undulating step, and giving me the precious document, said that that was his address, *Mr. Coleridge, Nether-Stowey, Somersetshire;* and that he should be glad to see me there in a few weeks' time, and, if I chose, would come half-way to meet me. I was not less surprised than the shepherd-boy (this simile is to be found in "Cassandra") when he sees a thunderbolt fall close at his feet. I stammered out my acknowledgments and acceptance of this offer (I thought Mr. Wedgwood's annuity a trifle to it) as well as I could; and this

mighty business being settled, the poet-preacher took leave, and I accompanied him six miles on the road. It was a fine morning in the middle of winter, and he talked the whole way. The scholar in Chaucer is described as going

—— "Sounding on his way."

So Coleridge went on his. In digressing, in dilating, in passing from subject to subject, he appeared to me to float in air, to slide on ice. He told me in confidence (going along) that he should have preached two sermons before he accepted the situation at Shrewsbury, one on Infant Baptism, the other on the Lord's Supper, showing that he could not administer either, which would have effectually disqualified him for the object in view. I observed that he continually crossed me on the way by shifting from one side of the footpath to the other. This struck me as an odd movement; but I did not at that time connect it with any instability of purpose or involuntary change of principle, as I have done since. He seemed unable to keep on in a straight line. He spoke slightingly of Hume (whose "Essay on Miracles" he said was stolen from an objection started in one of South's sermons—"*Credat Judæus Appella!*") I was not very much pleased at this account of Hume, for I had just been reading, with infinite relish, that completest of all metaphysical *chokepears*, his "Treatise on Human Nature," to which the "Essays," in point of scholastic subtilty and close reasoning, are mere elegant trifling, light summer reading. Coleridge even denied the excellence of Hume's general style, which I think betrayed a want of taste or candour. He, however, made me amends by the manner in which he spoke of Berkeley. He dwelt particularly on his "Essay on Vision" as a masterpiece of analytical reasoning. So it undoubtedly is. He was exceedingly angry with Dr. Johnson for striking the stone with his foot, in allusion to this author's "Theory of Matter and Spirit," and saying, "Thus I confute him, sir." Coleridge drew a parallel (I don't know how he brought about the connection) between Bishop Berkeley and Tom Paine. He said the one was an instance of a subtle, the other of an acute mind, than which no two things could be more distinct. The one was a shop-boy's quality, the other the characteristic of a philosopher. He considered Bishop Butler as a true philosopher, a profound and conscientious thinker, a genuine reader of nature and his own mind. He did not speak of his "Analogy," but of his "Sermons at the Rolls' Chapel," of which I had never heard. Coleridge somehow always contrived to prefer the *unknown* to the *known*. In this instance he was right. The "Analogy" is a tissue of sophistry, of wiredrawn,

theological special-pleading; the "Sermons" (with the preface to them) are in a fine vein of deep, matured reflection, a candid appeal to our observation of human nature, without pedantry and without bias. I told Coleridge I had written a few remarks, and was sometimes foolish enough to believe that I had made a discovery on the same subject (the *Natural Disinterestedness of the Human Mind*)—and I tried to explain my view of it to Coleridge, who listened with great willingness, but I did not succeed in making myself understood. I sat down to the task shortly afterwards for the twentieth time, got new pens and paper, determined to make clear work of it, wrote a few meagre sentences in the skeleton style of a mathematical demonstration, stopped half-way down the second page; and after trying in vain to pump up any words, images, notions, apprehensions, facts, or observations, from that gulf of abstraction in which I had plunged myself for four or five years preceding, gave up the attempt as labour in vain, and shed tears of helpless despondency on the blank, unfinished paper. I can write fast enough now. Am I better than I was then? Oh no! One truth discovered, one pang of regret at not being able to express it, is better than all the fluency and flippancy in the world. Would that I could go back to what I then was! Why can we not revive past times as we can revisit old places? If I had the quaint Muse of Sir Philip Sidney to assist me, I would write a "Sonnet to the Road between Wem and Shrewsbury," and immortalise every step of it by some fond enigmatical conceit. I would swear that the very milestones had ears, and that Harmer Hill stooped with all its pines to listen to a poet, as he passed! I remember but one other topic of discourse in this walk. He mentioned Paley, praised the naturalness and clearness of his style, but condemned his sentiments, thought him a mere time-serving casuist, and said that "the fact of his work on Moral and Political Philosophy being made a text-book in our Universities was a disgrace to the national character. We parted at the six-mile stone; and I returned homeward, pensive, but much pleased. I had met with unexpected notice from a person whom I believed to have been prejudiced against me. "Kind and affable to me had been his condescension, and should be honoured ever with suitable regard." He was the first poet I had known, and he certainly answered to that inspired name. I had heard a great deal of his powers of conversation, and was not disappointed. In fact, I never met with anything at all like them, either before or since. I could easily credit the accounts which were circulated of his holding forth to a large party of ladies and gentlemen, an evening or two before, on the Berkeleian Theory,

when he made the whole material universe look like a transparency of fine words; and another story (which I believe he has somewhere told himself) of his being asked to a party at Birmingham, of his smoking tobacco and going to sleep after dinner on a sofa, where the company found him, to their no small surprise, which was increased to wonder when he started up of a sudden, and rubbing his eyes, looked about him, and launched into a three hours' description of the third heaven, of which he had had a dream, very different from Mr. Southey's "Vision of Judgment," and also from that other "Vision of Judgment," which Mr. Murray, the Secretary of the Bridge Street Junta, took into his especial keeping.

On my way back I had a sound in my ears—it was the voice of Fancy; I had a light before me—it was the face of Poetry. The one still lingers there, the other has not quitted my side! Coleridge, in truth, met me half-way on the ground of philosophy, or I should not have been won over to his imaginative creed. I had an uneasy, pleasurable sensation all the time, till I was to visit him. During those months the chill breath of winter gave me a welcoming; the vernal air was balm and inspiration to me. The golden sunsets, the silver star of evening, lighted me on my way to new hopes and prospects. *I was to visit Coleridge in the spring.* This circumstance was never absent from my thoughts, and mingled with all my feelings. I wrote to him at the time proposed, and received an answer postponing my intended visit for a week or two, but very cordially urging me to complete my promise then. This delay did not damp, but rather increased my ardour. In the meantime I went to Llangollen Vale, by way of initiating myself in the mysteries of natural scenery; and I must say I was enchanted with it. I had been reading Coleridge's description of England in his fine "Ode on the Departing Year," and I applied it, *con amore*, to the objects before me. That valley was to me (in a manner) the cradle of a new existence: in the river that winds through it, my spirit was baptized in the waters of Helicon!

I returned home, and soon after set out on my journey with unworn heart and untired feet. My way lay through Worcester and Gloucester, and by Upton, where I thought of Tom Jones and the adventure of the muff. I remember getting completely wet through one day, and stopping at an inn (I think it was at Tewkesbury), where I sat up all night to read "Paul and Virginia." Sweet were the showers in early youth that drenched my body, and sweet the drops of pity that fell upon the books I read! I recollect a remark of Coleridge's upon this very book, that nothing could show the gross indelicacy of French manners and the entire corruption of

their imagination more strongly than the behaviour of the heroine in the last fatal scene, who turns away from a person on board the sinking vessel, that offers to save her life, because he has thrown off his clothes to assist him in swimming. Was this a time to think of such a circumstance? I once hinted to Wordsworth, as we were sailing in his boat on Grasmere lake, that I thought he had borrowed the idea of his "Poems on the Naming of Places" from the local inscriptions of the same kind in "Paul and Virginia." He did not own the obligation, and stated some distinction without a difference in defence of his claim to originality. Any, the slightest variation would be sufficient for this purpose in his mind; for whatever *he* added or altered would inevitably be worth all that any one else had done, and contain the marrow of the sentiment. It was still two days before the time fixed for my arrival, for I had taken care to set out early enough. I stopped these two days at Bridgewater; and when I was tired of sauntering on the banks of its muddy river, returned to the inn and read "Camilla." So have I loitered my life away, reading books, looking at pictures, going to plays, hearing, thinking, writing on what pleased me best. I have wanted only one thing to make me happy; but wanting that, have wanted everything!

I arrived, and was well received. The country about Nether Stowey is beautiful, green and hilly, and near the sea-shore. I saw it but the other day, after an inverval of twenty years, from a hill near Taunton. How was the map of my life spread out before me, as the map of the country lay at my feet! In the afternoon Coleridge took me over to All-Foxden, a romantic old family mansion of the St. Aubins', where Wordsworth lived. It was then in the possession of a friend of the poet's, who gave him the free use of it. Somehow, that period (the time just after the French Revolution) was not a time when *nothing was given for nothing.* The mind opened and a softness might be perceived coming over the heart of individuals, beneath "the scales that fence" our self-interest. Wordsworth himself was from home, but his sister kept house, and set before us a frugal repast; and we had free access to her brother's poems, the "Lyrical Ballads," which were still in manuscript, or in the form of "Sybilline Leaves." I dipped into a few of these with great satisfaction, and with the faith of a novice. I slept that night in an old room with blue hangings, and covered with the round-faced family portraits of the age of George I. and II., and from the wooded declivity of the adjoining park that overlooked my window at the dawn of day, could

——"hear the loud stag speak."

In the outset of life (and particularly at this time I felt it so) our imagination has a body to it. We are in a state between sleeping and waking, and have indistinct but glorious glimpses of strange shapes, and there is always something to come better than what we see. As in our dreams the fulness of the blood gives warmth and reality to the coinage of the brain, so in youth our ideas are clothed, and fed, and pampered with our good spirits; we breathe thick with thoughtless happiness, the weight of future years presses on the strong pulses of the heart, and we repose with undisturbed faith in truth and good. As we advance, we exhaust our fund of enjoyment and of hope. We are no longer wrapped in *lamb's-wool*, lulled in Elysium. As we taste the pleasures of life, their spirit evaporates, the sense palls; and nothing is left but the phantoms, the lifeless shadows of what *has been!*

That morning, as soon as breakfast was over, we strolled out into the park, and seating ourselves on the trunk of an old ash-tree that stretched along the ground, Coleridge read aloud with a sonorous and musical voice the ballad of "Betty Foy." I was not critically or sceptically inclined. I saw touches of truth and nature, and took the rest for granted. But in the "Thorn," the "Mad Mother," and the "Complaint of a Poor Indian Woman," I felt that deeper power and pathos which have been since acknowledged,

> "In spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,"

as the characteristics of this author; and the sense of a new style and a new spirit in poetry came over me. It had to me something of the effect that arises from the turning up of the fresh soil, or of the first welcome breath of Spring:

> "While yet the trembling year is unconfirmed."

Coleridge and myself walked back to Stowey that evening, and his voice sounded high

> "Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
> Fix'd fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute,"

as we passed through echoing grove, by fairy stream or waterfall, gleaming in the summer moonlight! He lamented that Wordsworth was not prone enough to believe in the traditional superstitions of the place, and that there was a something corporeal, a *matter-of-fact-ness*, a clinging to the palpable, or often to the petty, in his poetry, in consequence. His genius was not a spirit that descended to him through the air; it sprung out of the ground like a flower, or unfolded itself from a green spray, on which the

goldfinch sang. He said, however (if I remember right), that this objection must be confined to his descriptive pieces, that his philosophic poetry had a grand and comprehensive spirit in it, so that his soul seemed to inhabit the universe like a palace, and to discover truth by intuition, rather than by deduction. The next day Wordsworth arrived from Bristol at Coleridge's cottage. I think I see him now. He answered in some degree to his friend's description of him, but was more gaunt and Don Quixote-like. He was quaintly dressed (according to the *costume* of that unconstrained period) in a brown fustian jacket and striped pantaloons. There was something of a roll, a lounge, in his gait, not unlike his own "Peter Bell." There was a severe, worn pressure of thought about his temples, a fire in his eye (as if he saw something in objects more than the outward appearance), an intense, high, narrow forehead, a Roman nose, cheeks furrowed by strong purpose and feeling, and a convulsive inclination to laughter about the mouth, a good deal at variance with the solemn, stately expression of the rest of his face. Chantrey's bust wants the marking traits; but he was teased into making it regular and heavy: Haydon's head of him, introduced into the "Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem," is the most like his drooping weight of thought and expression. He sat down and talked very naturally and freely, with a mixture of clear, gushing accents in his voice, a deep guttural intonation, and a strong tincture of the northern *burr*, like the crust on wine. He instantly began to make havoc of the half of a Cheshire cheese on the table, and said, triumphantly, that "his marriage with experience had not been so productive as Mr. Southey's in teaching him a knowledge of the good things of this life." He had been to see the "Castle Spectre," by Monk Lewis, while at Bristol, and described it very well. He said "it fitted the taste of the audience like a glove." This *ad captandum* merit was, however, by no means a recommendation of it, according to the severe principles of the new school, which reject rather than court popular effect. Wordsworth, looking out of the low, latticed window, said, "How beautifully the sun sets on that yellow bank!" I thought within myself, "With what eyes these poets see nature!" and ever after, when I saw the sunset stream upon the objects facing it, conceived I had made a discovery, or thanked Mr. Wordsworth for having made one for me! We went over to All-Foxden again the day following, and Wordsworth read us the story of "Peter Bell" in the open air; and the comment upon it by his face and voice was very different from that of some later critics! Whatever might be thought of the poem, "his face was as a book where men might read strange matters," and he an-

nounced the fate of his hero in prophetic tones. There is a *chaunt* in the recitation both of Coleridge and Wordsworth, which acts as a spell upon the hearer, and disarms the judgment. Perhaps they have deceived themselves by making habitual use of this ambiguous accompaniment. Coleridge's manner is more full, animated, and varied; Wordsworth's more equable, sustained, and internal. The one might be termed more *dramatic*, the other more *lyrical*. Coleridge has told me that he himself liked to compose in walking over uneven ground, or breaking through the straggling branches of a copse-wood; whereas Wordsworth always wrote (if he could) walking up and down a straight gravel-walk, or in some spot where the continuity of his verse met with no collateral interruption. Returning that same evening, I got into a metaphysical argument with Wordsworth, while Coleridge was explaining the different notes of the nightingale to his sister, in which we neither of us succeeded in making ourselves perfectly clear and intelligible. Thus I passed three weeks at Nether Stowey and in the neighbourhood, generally devoting the afternoons to a delightful chat in an arbour made of bark by the poet's friend, Tom Poole, sitting under two fine elm-trees, and listening to the bees humming round us, while we quaffed our *flip*. It was agreed, among other things, that we should make a jaunt down the Bristol Channel, as far as Linton. We set off together on foot, Coleridge, John Chester, and I. This Chester was a native of Nether Stowey, one of those who were attracted to Coleridge's discourse as flies are to honey, or bees in swarming-time to the sound of a brass pan. He "followed in the chase like a dog who hunts, not like one that made up the cry." He had on a brown cloth coat, boots, and corduroy breeches, was low in stature, bow-legged, had a drag in his walk like a drover, which he assisted by a hazel switch, and kept on a sort of trot by the side of Coleridge, like a running footman by a state-coach, that he might not lose a syllable or sound that fell from Coleridge's lips. He told me his private opinion, that Coleridge was a wonderful man. He scarcely opened his lips, much less offered an opinion the whole way: yet of the three, had I to choose during that journey, I would be John Chester. He afterwards followed Coleridge into Germany, where the Kantean philosophers were puzzled how to bring him under any of their categories. When he sat down at table with his idol, John's felicity was complete; Sir Walter Scott's or Mr. Blackwood's, when they sat down at the same table with the King, was not more so. We passed Dunster on our right, a small town between the brow of a hill and the sea. I remember eyeing it wistfully as it lay below us: contrasted with the woody scene around, it looked as clear, as pure, as *embrowned* and

ideal as any landscape I have seen since, of Gaspar Poussin's or Domenichino's. We had a long day's march (our feet kept time to the echoes of Coleridge's tongue) through Minehead and by the Blue Anchor, and on to Linton, which we did not reach till near midnight, and where we had some difficulty in making a lodgment. We, however, knocked the people of the house up at last, and we were repaid for our apprehensions and fatigue by some excellent rashers of fried bacon and eggs. The view in coming along had been splendid. We walked for miles and miles on dark brown heaths overlooking the Channel, with the Welsh hills beyond, and at times descended into little sheltered valleys close by the seaside, with a smuggler's face scowling by us, and then had to ascend conical hills with a path winding up through a coppice to a barren top, like a monk's shaven crown, from one of which I pointed out to Coleridge's notice the bare masts of a vessel on the very edge of the horizon, and within the red-orbed disc of the setting sun, like his own spectre-ship in the "Ancient Mariner." At Linton the character of the sea-coast becomes more marked and rugged. There is a place called the "Valley of Rocks" (I suspect this was only the poetical name for it), bedded among precipices overhanging the sea, with rocky caverns beneath, into which the waves dash, and where the sea-gull for ever wheels its screaming flight. On the tops of these are huge stones thrown transverse, as if an earthquake had tossed them there, and behind these is a fretwork of perpendicular rocks, something like the Giant's Causeway. A thunderstorm came on while we were at the inn, and Coleridge was running out bareheaded to enjoy the commotion of the elements in the "Valley of Rocks;" but, as if in spite, the clouds only muttered a few angry sounds, and let fall a few refreshing drops. Coleridge told me that he and Wordsworth were to have made this place the scene of a prose tale, which was to have been in the manner of, but far superior to, the "Death of Abel," but they had relinquished the design. In the morning of the second day, we breakfasted luxuriously in an old-fashioned parlour, on tea, toast, eggs, and honey, in the very sight of the bee-hives from which it had been taken, and a garden full of thyme and wild flowers that had produced it. On this occasion Coleridge spoke of Virgil's "Georgics," but not well. I do not think he had much feeling for the classical or elegant. It was in this room that we found a little worn-out copy of the "Seasons," lying in a window-seat, on which Coleridge exclaimed, "*That* is true fame!" He said Thomson was a great poet, rather than a good one; his style was as meretricious as his thoughts were natural. He spoke of Cowper as the best modern poet. He said the "Lyrical Ballads" were an experiment about to be

tried by him and Wordsworth, to see how far the public taste would endure poetry written in a more natural and simple style than had hitherto been attempted; totally discarding the artifices of poetical diction, and making use only of such words as had probably been common in the most ordinary language since the days of Henry II. Some comparison was introduced between Shakspeare and Milton. He said "he hardly knew which to prefer. Shakspeare appeared to him a mere stripling in the art; he was as tall and as strong, with infinitely more activity than Milton, but he never appeared to have come to man's estate; or if he had, he would not have been a man, but a monster." He spoke with contempt of Gray, and with intolerance of Pope. He did not like the versification of the latter. He observed that "the ears of these couplet-writers might be charged with having short memories, that could not retain the harmony of whole passages." He thought little of Junius as a writer; he had a dislike of Dr. Johnson; and a much higher opinion of Burke as an orator and politician than of Fox or Pitt. He, however, thought him very inferior in richness of style and imagery to some of our elder prose-writers, particularly Jeremy Taylor. He liked Richardson, but not Fielding; nor could I get him to enter into the merits of "Caleb Williams." In short, he was profound and discriminating with respect to those authors whom he liked, and where he gave his judgment fair-play; capricious, perverse, and prejudiced in his antipathies and distastes. We loitered on the "ribbed sea-sands," in such talk as this, a whole morning, and, I recollect, met with a curious seaweed, of which John Chester told us the country name! A fisherman give Coleridge an account of a boy that had been drowned the day before, and that they had tried to save him at the risk of their own lives. He said "he did not know how it was that they ventured, but, sir, we have a *nature* towards one another." This expression, Coleridge remarked to me, was a fine illustration of that theory of disinterestedness which I (in common with Butler) had adopted. I broached to him an argument of mine to prove that *likeness* was not mere association of ideas. I said that the mark in the sand put one in mind of a man's foot, not because it was part of a former impression of a man's foot (for it was quite new), but because it was like the shape of a man's foot. He assented to the justness of this distinction (which I have explained at length elsewhere for the benefit of the curious), and John Chester listened; not from any interest in the subject, but because he was astonished that I should be able to suggest anything to Coleridge that he did not already know. We returned on the third morning, and Coleridge remarked the silent cottage-smoke curling up the valleys, where, a

few evenings before, we had seen the lights gleaming through the dark.

In a day or two after we arrived at Stowey we set out, I on my return home, and he for Germany. It was a Sunday morning, and he was to preach that day for Dr. Toulmin of Taunton. I asked him if he had prepared anything for the occasion. He said he had not even thought of the text, but should as soon as we parted. I did not go to hear him—this was a fault—but we met in the evening at Bridgewater. The next day we had a long day's walk to Bristol, and sat down, I recollect, by a well-side on the road, to cool ourselves and satisfy our thirst, when Coleridge repeated to me some descriptive lines of his tragedy of "Remorse," which I must say became his mouth and that occasion better than they, some years after, did Mr. Elliston's and the Drury Lane boards—

> "Oh memory! shield me from the world's poor strife,
> And give those scenes thine everlasting life."

I saw no more of him for a year or two, during which period he had been wandering in the Hartz Forest, in Germany; and his return was cometary, meteorous, unlike his setting out. It was not till some time after that I knew his friends Lamb and Southey. The last always appears to me (as I first saw him) with a common-place-book under his arm, and the first with a *bon-mot* in his mouth. It was at Godwin's that I met him with Holcroft and Coleridge, where they were disputing fiercely which was the best—*Man as he was, or man as he is to be.* "Give me," says Lamb, "man as he is *not* to be." This saying was the beginning of a friendship between us, which I believe still continues. Enough of this for the present.

> "But there is matter for another rhyme,
> And I to this may add a second tale."

OF PERSONS ONE WOULD WISH TO HAVE SEEN.

> "Come like shadows—so depart."

Lamb it was, I think, who suggested this subject, as well as the defence of Guy Faux, which I urged him to execute. As, however, he would undertake neither, I suppose I must do both, a task for which he would have been much fitter, no less from the temerity than the felicity of his pen:

> "Never so sure our rapture to create
> As when it touch'd the brink of all we hate."

Compared with him, I shall, I fear, make but a commonplace piece of business of it; but I should be loth the idea was entirely lost, and, besides, I may avail myself of some hints of his in the progress of it. I am sometimes, I suspect, a better reporter of the ideas of other people than expounder of my own. I pursue the one too far into paradox or mysticism; the others I am not bound to follow further than I like, or than seems fair and reasonable.

On the question being started, Ayrton said, "I suppose the two first persons you would choose to see would be the two greatest names in English literature, Sir Isaac Newton and Mr. Locke?" In this Ayrton, as usual, reckoned without his host. Every one burst out a-laughing at the expression of Lamb's face, in which impatience was restrained by courtesy. "Yes, the greatest names," he stammered out hastily, "but they were not persons—not persons."—"Not persons?" said Ayrton, looking wise and foolish at the same time, afraid his triumph might be premature. "That is," rejoined Lamb, "not characters, you know. By Mr. Locke and Sir Isaac Newton you mean the 'Essay on the Human Understanding' and the 'Principia,' which we have to this day. Beyond their contents there is nothing personally interesting in the men. But what we want to see any one *bodily* for, is when there is something peculiar, striking in the individuals, more than we can learn from their writings, and yet are curious to know. I dare say Locke and Newton were very like Kneller's portraits of them. But who could paint Shakspeare?"—"Ay," retorted Ayrton, "there it is; then I suppose you would prefer seeing him and Milton instead?"—"No," said Lamb, "neither. I have seen so much of Shakspeare on the stage and on bookstalls, in frontispieces and on mantelpieces, that I am quite tired of the everlasting repetition: and as to Milton's face, the impressions that have come down to us of it I do not like; it is too starched and puritanical; and I should be afraid of losing some of the manna of his poetry in the leaven of his countenance and the precisian's band and gown."—"I shall guess no more," said Ayrton. "Who is it, then, you would like to see 'in his habit as he lived,' if you had your choice of the whole range of English literature?" Lamb then named Sir Thomas Browne and Fulke Greville, the friend of Sir Philip Sidney, as the two worthies whom he should feel the greatest pleasure to encounter on the floor of his apartment in their nightgown and slippers, and to exchange friendly greeting with them. At this Ayrton laughed outright, and conceived Lamb was jesting with him; but as no one followed his example, he thought there might be something in it, and waited for an explanation in a state of whimsical suspense. Lamb then (as well as I

can remember a conversation that passed twenty years ago—how time slips!) went on as follows:—"The reason why I pitch upon these two authors is, that their writings are riddles, and they themselves the most mysterious of personages. They resemble the soothsayers of old, who dealt in dark hints and doubtful oracles; and I should like to ask them the meaning of what no mortal but themselves, I should suppose, can fathom. There is Dr. Johnson: I have no curiosity, no strange uncertainty about him; he and Boswell together have pretty well let me into the secret of what passed through his mind. He and other writers like him are sufficiently explicit: my friends whose repose I should be tempted to disturb (were it in my power) are implicit, inextricable, inscrutable.

"When I look at that obscure but gorgeous prose composition, the 'Urn-burial,' I seem to myself to look into a deep abyss, at the bottom of which are hid pearls and rich treasure; or it is like a stately labyrinth of doubt and withering speculation, and I would invoke the spirit of the author to lead me through it. Besides, who would not be curious to see the lineaments of a man who, having himself been twice married, wished that mankind were propagated like trees! As to Fulke Greville, he is like nothing but one of his own 'Prologues spoken by the ghost of an old king of Ormus,' a truly formidable and inviting personage: his style is apocalyptical, cabalistical, a knot worthy of such an apparition to untie; and for the unravelling a passage or two, I would stand the brunt of an encounter with so portentous a commentator!"—"I am afraid, in that case," said Ayrton, "that if the mystery were once cleared up, the merit might be lost;" and turning to me, whispered a friendly apprehension, that while Lamb continued to admire these old crabbed authors, he would never become a popular writer. Dr. Donne was mentioned as a writer of the same period, with a very interesting countenance, whose history was singular, and whose meaning was often quite as *uncomeatable*, without a personal citation from the dead, as that of any of his contemporaries. . . .

Some one then inquired of Lamb if we could not see from the window the Temple walk in which Chaucer used to take his exercise; and on his name being put to the vote, I was pleased to find that there was a general sensation in his favour in all but Ayrton, who said something about the ruggedness of the metre, and even objected to the quaintness of the orthography. I was vexed at this superficial gloss, pertinaciously reducing everything to its own trite level, and asked "if he did not think it would be worth while to scan the eye that had first greeted the Muse in that dim twilight and early dawn of English literature; to see the head round which

the visions of fancy must have played like gleams of inspiration or a sudden glory; to watch those lips that 'lisped in numbers, for the numbers came'—as by a miracle, or as if the dumb should speak? Nor was it alone that he had been the first to tune his native tongue (however imperfectly to modern ears); but he was himself a noble, manly character, standing before his age and striving to advance it; a pleasant humorist withal, who has not only handed down to us the living manners of his time, but had, no doubt, store of curious and quaint devices, and would make as hearty a companion as mine host of the Tabard. His interview with Petrarch is fraught with interest. Yet I would rather have seen Chaucer in company with the author of the 'Decameron,' and have heard them exchange their best stories together—the 'Squire's Tale' against the 'Story of the Falcon,' the 'Wife of Bath's Prologue' against the 'Adventures of Friar Albert.' How fine to see the high mysterious brow which learning then wore, relieved by the gay, familiar tone of men of the world, and by the courtesies of genius! Surely, the thoughts and feelings which passed through the minds of these great revivers of learning, these Cadmuses who sowed the teeth of letters, must have stamped an expression on their features as different from the moderns as their books, and well worth the perusal. Dante," I continued, "is as interesting a person as his own Ugolino, one whose lineaments curiosity would as eagerly devour in order to penetrate his spirit, and the only one of the Italian poets I should care much to see. There is a fine portrait of Ariosto by no less a hand than Titian's; light, Moorish, spirited, but not answering our idea. The same artist's large colossal profile of Peter Aretine is the only likeness of the kind that has the effect of conversing with 'the mighty dead;' and this is truly spectral, ghastly, necromantic." Lamb put it to me if I should like to see Spenser as well as Chaucer; and I answered, without hesitation, "No; for that his beauties were ideal, visionary, not palpable or personal, and therefore connected with less curiosity about the man. His poetry was the essence of romance, a very halo round the bright orb of fancy; and the bringing in the individual might dissolve the charm. No tones of voice could come up to the mellifluous cadence of his verse; no form but of a winged angel could vie with the airy shapes he has described. He was (to my apprehension) rather a 'creature of the element, that lived in the rainbow and played in the plighted clouds,' than an ordinary mortal. Or if he did appear, I should wish it to be as a mere vision, like one of his own pageants, and that he should pass by unquestioned like a dream or sound:

——'*That* was Arion crown'd:
So went he playing on the wat'ry plain.'"

Captain Burney muttered something about Columbus, and Martin Burney hinted at the Wandering Jew; but the last was set aside as spurious, and the first made over to the New World.

"I should like," said Mrs. Reynolds, "to have seen Pope talk with Patty Blount; and I *have* seen Goldsmith." Every one turned round to look at Mrs. Reynolds, as if by so doing they could get a sight at Goldsmith.

"Where," asked a harsh, croaking voice, "was Dr. Johnson in the years 1745–6? He did not write anything that we know of, nor is there any account of him in Boswell during those two years. Was he in Scotland with the Pretender? He seems to have passed through the scenes in the Highlands in company with Boswell, many years after, 'with lack-lustre eye,' yet as if they were familiar to him, or associated in his mind with interests that he durst not explain. If so, it would be an additional reason for my liking him; and I would give something to have seen him seated in the tent with the youthful Majesty of Britain, and penning the Proclamation to all true subjects and adherents of the legitimate Government."

"I thought," said Ayrton, turning short round upon Lamb, "that you of the Lake School did not like Pope?"—"Not like Pope! My dear sir, you must be under a mistake—I can read him over and over for ever!"—"Why, certainly, the 'Essay on Man' must be allowed to be a masterpiece."—"It may be so, but I seldom look into it."—"Oh! then it's his Satires you admire?"—"No, not his Satires, but his friendly Epistles and his compliments."—"Compliments! I did not know he ever made any."—"The finest," said Lamb, "that were ever paid by the wit of man. Each of them is worth an estate for life—nay, is an immortality. There is that superb one to Lord Cornbury:

'Despise low joys, low gains;
Disdain whatever Cornbury disdains:
Be virtuous, and be happy for your pains.'

Was there ever more artful insinuation of idolatrous praise? And then that noble apotheosis of his friend Lord Mansfield (however little deserved), when, speaking of the House of Lords, he adds:

'Conspicuous scene! another yet is nigh,
(More silent far) where kings and poets lie;
Where Murray (long enough his country's pride)
Shall be no more than Tully or than Hyde.'

And with what a fine turn of indignant flattery he addresses Lord Bolingbroke:

> 'Why rail they then, if but one wreath of mine,
> Oh! all-accomplish'd St. John, deck thy shrine?'

Or turn," continued Lamb, with a slight hectic on his cheek and his eye glistening, "to his list of early friends:

> 'But why then publish? Granville the polite,
> And knowing Walsh, would tell me I could write;
> Well-natured Garth inflamed with early praise,
> And Congreve loved, and Swift endured my lays:
> The courtly Talbot, Somers, Sheffield read,
> Ev'n mitred Rochester would nod the head;
> And St. John's self (great Dryden's friend before)
> Received with open arms one poet more.
> Happy my studies, if by these approved!
> Happier their author, if by these beloved!
> From these the world will judge of men and books,
> Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cooks.'"

Here his voice totally failed him, and throwing down the book, he said, "Do you think I would not wish to have been friends with such a man as this?"

"What say you to Dryden?"—"He rather made a show of himself, and courted popularity in that lowest temple of fame, a coffee-shop, so as in some measure to vulgarise one's idea of him. Pope, on the contrary, reached the very *beau ideal* of what a poet's life should be; and his fame while living seemed to be an emanation from that which was to circle his name after death. He was so far enviable (and one would feel proud to have witnessed the rare spectacle in him) that he was almost the only poet and man of genius who met with his reward on this side of the tomb, who realised in friends, fortune, the esteem of the world, the most sanguine hopes of a youthful ambition, and who found that sort of patronage from the great during his lifetime which they would be thought anxious to bestow upon him after his death. Read Gay's verses to him on his supposed return from Greece, after his translation of Homer was finished, and say if you would not gladly join the bright procession that welcomed him home, or see it once more land at Whitehall stairs."—"Still," said Mrs. Reynolds, "I would rather have seen him talking with Patty Blount, or riding by in a coronet-coach with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu!"

Erasmus Phillips, who was deep in a game of piquet at the other end of the room, whispered to Martin Burney to ask if Junius

would not be a fit person to invoke from the dead. "Yes," said Lamb, "provided he would agree to lay aside his mask."

We were now at a stand for a short time, when Fielding was mentioned as a candidate; only one, however, seconded the proposition. "Richardson?"—"By all means, but only to look at him through the glass-door of his back-shop, hard at work upon one of his novels (the most extraordinary contrast that ever was presented between an author and his works); not to let him come behind his counter, lest he should want you to turn customer, or to go upstairs with him, lest he should offer to read the first manuscript of 'Sir Charles Grandison,' which was originally written in eight-and-twenty volumes octavo, or get out the letters of his female correspondents, to prove that Joseph Andrews was low."

There was but one statesman in the whole of English history that any one expressed the least desire to see—Oliver Cromwell, with his fine, frank, rough, pimply face, and wily policy; and one enthusiast, John Bunyan, the immortal author of the "Pilgrim's Progress." It seemed that if he came into the room, dreams would follow him, and that each person would nod under his golden cloud, "nighsphered in heaven," a canopy as strange and stately as any in Homer.

Of all persons near our own time, Garrick's name was received with the greatest enthusiasm, who was proposed by Barron Field. He presently superseded both Hogarth nnd Handel, who had been talked of, but then it was on condition that he should act in tragedy and comedy, in the play and the farce, "Lear" and "Wildair" and "Abel Drugger." What a *sight for sore eyes* that would be! Who would not part with a year's income at least, almost with a year of his natural life, to be present at it? Besides, as he could not act alone, and recitations are unsatisfactory things, what a troop he must bring with him!—the silver-tongued Barry, and Quin, and Shuter and Weston, and Mrs. Clive and Mrs. Pritchard, of whom I have heard my father speak as so great a favourite when he was young. This would indeed be a revival of the dead, the restoring of art; and so much the more desirable, as such is the lurking scepticism mingled with our overstrained admiration of past excellence, that though we have the speeches of Burke, the portraits of Reynolds, the writings of Goldsmith, and the conversation of Johnson, to show what people could do at that period, and to confirm the universal testimony to the merits of Garrick; yet, as it was before our time, we have our misgivings, as if he was probably, after all, little better than a Bartlemy Fair actor, dressed out to play Macbeth in a scarlet coat and laced cocked hat. For one,

I should like to have seen and heard with my own eyes and ears. Certainly, by all accounts, if any one was ever moved by the true histrionic *æstus*, it was Garrick. When he followed the Ghost in "Hamlet," he did not drop the sword, as most actors do, behind the scenes, but kept the point raised the whole way round, so fully was he possessed with the idea, or so anxious not to lose sight of his part for a moment. Once, at a splendid dinner-party at Lord ——'s, they suddenly missed Garrick, and could not imagine what was become of him, till they were drawn to the window by the convulsive screams and peals of laughter of a young negro boy, who was rolling on the ground in an ecstasy of delight to see Garrick mimicking a turkey-cock in the courtyard, with his coat-tail stuck out behind, and in a seeming flutter of feathered rage and pride. Of our party only two persons present had seen the British Roscius; and they seemed as willing as the rest to renew their acquaintance with their old favourite.

We were interrupted in the hey-day and mid-career of this fanciful speculation by a grumbler in a corner, who declared it was a shame to make all this rout about a mere player and farce-writer, to the neglect and exclusion of the fine old dramatists, the contemporaries and rivals of Shakspeare. Lamb said he had anticipated this objection when he had named the author of "Mustapha" and "Alaham;" and, out of caprice, insisted upon keeping him to represent the set, in preference to the wild, hare-brained enthusiast, Kit Marlowe; to the sexton of St. Ann's, Webster, with his melancholy yew-trees and death's-heads; to Decker, who was but a garrulous proser; to the voluminous Heywood; and even to Beaumont and Fletcher, whom we might offend by complimenting the wrong author on their joint productions. Lord Brooke, on the contrary, stood quite by himself, or, in Cowley's words, was "a vast species alone." Some one hinted at the circumstance of his being a lord, which rather startled Lamb, but he said a *ghost* would perhaps dispense with strict etiquette, on being regularly addressed by his title. Ben Jonson divided our suffrages pretty equally. Some were afraid he would begin to traduce Shakspeare, who was not present to defend himself. "If he grows disagreeable," it was whispered aloud, "there is Godwin can match him." At length his romantic visit to Drummond of Hawthornden was mentioned, and turned the scale in his favour.

Lamb inquired if there was any one that was hanged that I would choose to mention. And I answered, "Eugene Aram." The name of the "Admirable Crichton" was suddenly started as a splendid example of *waste* talents, so different from the generality of his countrymen. This choice was mightily approved by a North-Briton present, who

declared himself descended from that prodigy of learning and accomplishment, and said he had family plate in his possession as vouchers for the fact, with the initials A. C.—*Admirable Crichton!* Hunt laughed, or rather roared, as heartily at this as I should think he has done for many years.

The last-named Mitre-courtier then wished to know whether there were any metaphysicians to whom one might be tempted to apply the wizard spell. I replied, there were only six in modern times deserving the name—Hobbes, Berkeley, Butler, Hartley, Hume, Leibnitz, and perhaps Jonathan Edwards, a Massachusetts man. As to the French, who talked fluently of having *created* this science, there was not a tittle in any of their writings that was not to be found literally in the authors I had mentioned. [Horne Tooke, who might have a claim to come in under the head of Grammar, was still living.] None of these names seemed to excite much interest, and I did not plead for the reappearance of those who might be thought best fitted by the abstracted nature of their studies for the present spiritual and disembodied state, and who, even while on this living stage, were nearly divested of common flesh and blood. As Ayrton, with an uneasy, fidgety face, was about to put some question about Mr. Locke and Dugald Stewart, he was prevented by Martin Burney, who observed, "If J—— was here, he would undoubtedly be for having up those profound and redoubted socialists, Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus." I said this might be fair enough in him who had read, or fancied he had read, the original works, but I did not see how we could have any right to call up these authors to give an account of themselves in person, till we had looked into their writings.

By this time it should seem that some rumour of our whimsical deliberation had got wind, and had disturbed the *irritable genus* in their shadowy abodes, for we received messages from several candidates that we had just been thinking of. Gray declined our invitation, though he had not yet been asked; Gay offered to come, and bring in his hand the Duchess of Bolton, the original Polly; Steele and Addison left their cards as Captain Sentry and Sir Roger de Coverley; Swift came in and sat down without speaking a word, and quitted the room as abruptly; Otway and Chatterton were seen lingering on the opposite side of the Styx, but could not muster enough between them to pay Charon his fare; Thomson fell asleep in the boat, and was rowed back again; and Burns sent a low fellow, one John Barleycorn, an old companion of his, who had conducted him to the other world, to say that he had during his lifetime been drawn out of his retirement as a show, only to be made an excise-

man of, and that he would rather remain where he was. He desired, however, to shake hands by his representative—the hand, thus held out, was in a burning fever, and shook prodigiously.

The room was hung round with several portraits of eminent painters. While we were debating whether we should demand speech with these masters of mute eloquence, whose features were so familiar to us, it seemed that all at once they glided from their frames, and seated themselves at some little distance from us. There was Leonardo, with his majestic beard and watchful eye, having a bust of Archimedes before him; next him was Raphael's graceful head turned round to the Fornarina; and on his other side was Lucretia Borgia, with calm, golden locks; Michael Angelo had placed the model of St. Peter's on the table before him; Correggio had an angel at his side; Titian was seated with his mistress between himself and Giorgione; Guido was accompanied by his own Aurora, who took a dice-box from him; Claude held a mirror in his hand; Rubens patted a beautiful panther (led in by a satyr) on the head; Vandyke appeared as his own Paris, and Rembrandt was hid under firs, gold chains, and jewels, which Sir Joshua eyed closely, holding his hand so as to shade his forehead. Not a word was spoken; and as we rose to do them homage, they still presented the same surface to the view. Not being *bonâ-fide* representations of living people, we got rid of the splendid apparitions by signs and dumb show. As soon as they had melted into thin air, there was a loud noise at the outer door, and we found it was Giotto, Cimabue, and Ghirlandaio, who had been raised from the dead by their earnest desire to see their illustrious successors—

> "Whose names on earth
> In Fame's eternal records live for aye!"

Finding them gone, they had no ambition to be seen after them, and mournfully withdrew. "Egad!" said Lamb, "these are the very fellows I should like to have had some talk with, to know how they could see to paint when all was dark around them."

"But shall we have nothing to say?" interrogated G. J——, "to the 'Legend of Good Women?'"—"Name, name, Mr. J——," cried Hunt in a boisterous tone of friendly exultation, "name as many as you please, without reserve or fear of molestation!" J—— was perplexed between so many amiable recollections, that the name of the lady of his choice expired in a pensive whiff of his pipe; and Lamb impatiently declared for the Duchess of Newcastle. Mrs. Hutchinson was no sooner mentioned, than she carried the day from the Duchess. We were the less solicitous on this subject of

filling up the posthumous lists of Good Women, as there was already one in the room as good, as sensible, and in all respects as exemplary as the best of them could be for their lives! "I should like vastly to have seen Ninon de l'Enclos," said that incomparable person; and this immediately put us in mind that we had neglected to pay honour due to our friends on the other side of the Channel: Voltaire, the patriarch of levity, and Rousseau, the father of sentiment; Montaigne and Rabelais (great in wisdom and in wit); Molière and that illustrious group that are collected round him (in the print of that subject) to hear him read his comedy of the "Tartuffe" at the house of Ninon; Racine, La Fontaine, Rochefoucauld, St. Evremont, &c.

"There is one person," said a shrill, querulous voice, "I would rather see than all these—Don Quixote!"

"Come, come!" said Hunt; "I thought we should have no heroes, real or fabulous. What say you, Mr. Lamb? Are you for eking out your shadowy list with such names as Alexander, Julius Cæsar, Tamerlane, or Ghengis Khan?"—"Excuse me," said Lamb; "on the subject of characters in active life, plotters and disturbers of the world, I have a crotchet of my own, which I beg leave to reserve."—"No, no! come out with your worthies!"—"What do you think of Guy Fawkes and Judas Iscariot?" Hunt turned an eye upon him like a wild Indian, but cordial and full of smothered glee. "Your most exquisite reason!" was echoed on all sides; and Ayrton thought that Lamb had now fairly entangled himself. "Why, I cannot but think," retorted he of the wistful countenance, "that Guy Fawkes, that poor, fluttering annual scarecrow of straw and rags, is an ill-used gentleman. I would give something to see him sitting pale and emaciated, surrounded by his matches and his barrels of gunpowder, and expecting the moment that was to transport him to Paradise for his heroic self-devotion; but if I say any more, there is that fellow Godwin will make something of it. And as to Judas Iscariot, my reason is different. I would fain see the face of him who, having dipped his hand in the same dish with the Son of Man, could afterwards betray Him. I have no conception of such a thing; nor have I ever seen any picture (not even Leonardo's very fine one) that gave me the least idea of it."—"You have said enough, Mr. Lamb, to justify your choice."

"Oh! ever right, Menenius—ever right!"

"There is only one other person I can ever think of after this," continued Lamb; but without mentioning a name that once put on a semblance of mortality. "If Shakspeare was to come into the room, we should all rise up to meet him; but if that person was

to come into it, we should all fall down and try to kiss the hem of His garment!"

As a lady present seemed now to get uneasy at the turn the conversation had taken, we rose up to go. The morning broke with that dim, dubious light by which Giotto, Cimabue, and Ghirlandaio must have seen to paint their earliest works; and we parted to meet again and renew similar topics at night, the next night, and the night after that, till that night overspread Europe which saw no dawn. The same event, in truth, broke up our little Congress that broke up the great one. But that was to meet again: our deliberations have never been resumed.

TOLERATION.

[From the Essay, "On Party Spirit."]

We may be intolerant even in advocating the cause of toleration, and so bent on making proselytes to freethinking as to allow no one to think freely but ourselves. The most boundless liberality in appearance may amount in reality to the most monstrous ostracism of opinion—not condemning this or that tenet, or standing up for this or that sect or party, but in a supercilious superiority to all sects and parties alike, and proscribing, in one sweeping clause, all arts, sciences, opinions, and pursuits but our own. Till the time of Locke and Toland a general toleration was never dreamt of: it was thought right on all hands to punish and discountenance heretics and schismatics, but each party alternately claimed to be true Christians and orthodox believers. Daniel De Foe, who spent his whole life, and wasted his strength, in asserting the right of the Dissenters to a Toleration (and got nothing for his pains but the pillory), was scandalised at the proposal of the general principle, and was equally strenuous in excluding Quakers, Anabaptists, Socinians, Sceptics, and all who did not agree in the *essentials* of Christianity—that is, who did not agree with him—from the benefit of such an indulgence to tender consciences. We wonder at the cruelties formerly practised upon the Jews: is there anything wonderful in it? They were at that time the only people to make a butt and a bugbear of, to set up as a mark of indignity, and as a foil to our self-love, for the *ferœ naturæ* principle that is within us, and always craving its prey to run down, to worry and make sport of at discretion, and without mercy—the unvarying uniformity and implicit faith of the Catholic Church had imposed silence, and put a curb on our jarring dissensions, heart-burnings, and ill-blood, so that we had

no pretence for quarrelling among ourselves for the glory of God or the salvation of men:—a JORDANUS BRUNO, an Atheist or sorcerer, once in a way, would hardly suffice to stay the stomach of our theological rancour; we therefore fell with might and main upon the Jews as a *forlorn hope* in this dearth of objects of spite or zeal; or when the whole of Europe was reconciled to the bosom of holy Mother Church, went to the Holy Land in search of a difference of opinion, and a ground of mortal offence; but no sooner was there a division of the Christian world, than Papists fell on Protestants or Schismatics, and Schismatics upon one another, with the same loving fury as they had before fallen upon Turks and Jews. The disposition is always there, like a muzzled mastiff; the pretext only is wanting; and this is furnished by a name, which, as soon as it is affixed to different sects or parties, gives us a licence, we think, to let loose upon them all our malevolence, domineering humour, love of power, and wanton mischief, as if they were of different species. The sentiment of the pious English bishop was good, who, on seeing a criminal let to execution, exclaimed, "There goes my wicked self!"

ON THE FEELING OF IMMORTALITY IN YOUTH.

No young man believes he shall ever die. It was a saying of my brother's, and a fine one. There is a feeling of Eternity in youth which makes us amends for everything. To be young is to be as one of the Immortals. One half of time indeed is spent—the other half remains in store for us, with all its countless treasures, for there is no line drawn, and we see no limit to our hopes and wishes. We make the coming age our own—

> "The vast, the unbounded prospect lies before us."

Death, old age, are words without a meaning, a dream, a fiction, with which we have nothing to do. Others may have undergone, or may still undergo them—we "bear a charmed life," which laughs to scorn all such idle fancies. As, in setting out on a delightful journey, we strain our eager sight forward,

> "Bidding the lovely scenes at distance hail,"

and see no end to prospect after prospect, new objects presenting themselves as we advance, so in the outset of life we see no end to our desires nor to the opportunities of gratifying them. We have as yet found no obstacle, no disposition to flag, and it seems that we can go on so for ever. We look round in a new world, full of

life and motion, and ceaseless progress, and feel in ourselves all the vigour and spirit to keep pace with it, and do not foresee from any present signs how we shall be left behind in the race, decline into old age, and drop into the grave. It is the simplicity and, as it were, abstractedness of our feelings in youth that (so to speak) identifies us with nature and (our experience being weak and our passions strong) makes us fancy ourselves immortal like it. Our short-lived connection with being, we fondly flatter ourselves, is an indissoluble and lasting union. As infants smile and sleep, we are rocked in the cradle of our desires, and hushed into fancied security by the roar of the universe around us—we quaff the cup of life with eager thirst without draining it, and joy and hope seem ever mantling to the brim—objects press around us, filling the mind with their magnitude and with the throng of desires that wait upon them, so that there is no room for the thoughts of death. We are too much dazzled by the gorgeousness and novelty of the bright waking dream about us to discern the dim shadow lingering for us in the distance. Nor would the hold that life has taken of us permit us to detach our thoughts that way, even if we could. We are too much absorbed in present objects and pursuits. While the spirit of youth remains unimpaired, ere "the wine of life is drunk," we are like people intoxicated or in a fever, who are hurried away by the violence of their own sensations: it is only as present objects begin to pall upon the sense, as we have been disappointed in our favourite pursuits, cut off from our closest ties, that we by degrees become weaned from the world, that passion loosens its hold upon futurity, and that we begin to contemplate as in a glass darkly the possibility of parting with it for good. Till then, the example of others has no effect upon us. Casualties we avoid; the slow approaches of age we play at *hide-and-seek* with. Like the foolish fat scullion in Sterne, who hears that Master Bobby is dead, our only reflection is, "So am not I!" The idea of death, instead of staggering our confidence, only seems to strengthen and enhance our sense of the possession and enjoyment of life. Others may fall around us like leaves, or be mowed down by the scythe of Time like grass: these are but metaphors to the unreflecting, buoyant ears and overweening presumption of youth. It is not till we see the flowers of Love, Hope, and Joy withering around us, that we give up the flattering delusions that before led us on, and that the emptiness and dreariness of the prospect before us reconciles us hypothetically to the silence of the grave.

Life is indeed a strange gift, and its privileges are most mysterious. No wonder, when it is first granted to us, that our gratitude, our

admiration, and our delight should prevent us from reflecting on our own nothingness, or from thinking it will ever be recalled. Our first and strongest impressions are borrowed from the mighty scene that is opened to us, and we unconsciously transfer its durability as well as its splendour to ourselves. So newly found, we cannot think of parting with it yet, or at least put off that consideration *sine die*. Like a rustic at a fair, we are full of amazement and rapture, and have no thought of going home, or that it will soon be night. We know our existence only by ourselves, and confound our knowledge with the objects of it. We and Nature are therefore one. Otherwise the illusion, the "feast of reason and the flow of soul," to which we are invited, is a mockery and a cruel insult. We do not go from a play till the last act is ended and the lights are about to be extinguished. But the fairy face of Nature still shines on: shall we be called away before the curtain falls, or ere we have scarce had a glimpse of what is going on? Like children, our stepmother Nature holds us up to see the raree-show of the universe, and then, as if we were a burden to her to support, lets us fall down again. Yet what brave sublunary things does not this pageant present, like a ball or *fête* of the universe!

To see the golden sun, the azure sky, the outstretched ocean; to walk upon the green earth, and be lord of a thousand creatures; to look down yawning precipices or over distant sunny vales; to see the world spread out under one's feet on a map; to bring the stars near; to view the smallest insects through a microscope; to read history, and consider the revolutions of empire and the successions of generations; to hear of the glory of Tyre, of Sidon, of Babylon, and of Susa, and to say all these were before me and are now nothing; to say I exist in such a point of time, and in such a point of space; to be a spectator and a part of its ever-moving scene; to witness the change of season, of spring and autumn, of winter and summer; to feel hot and cold, pleasure and pain, beauty and deformity, right and wrong; to be sensible to the accidents of nature; to consider the mighty world of eye and ear; to listen to the stock-dove's notes amid the forest deep; to journey over moor and mountain; to hear the midnight sainted choir; to visit lighted halls, or the cathedral's gloom, or sit in crowded theatres and see life itself mocked; to study the works of art and refine the sense of beauty to agony; to worship fame, and to dream of immortality; to look upon the Vatican, and to read Shakspeare; to gather up the wisdom of the ancients, and to pry into the future; to listen to the trump of war, the shout of victory; to question history as to the movements of the human heart; to seek for truth; to plead the cause of humanity; to over-

look the world as if time and Nature poured their treasures at our feet—to be and to do all this, and then in a moment to be nothing —to have it all snatched from us by a juggler's trick or a phantasmagoria! There is something in this transition from all to nothing that shocks us and damps the enthusiasm of youth new flushed with hope and pleasure, and we cast the comfortless thought as far from us as we can. In the first enjoyment of the estate of life we discard the fear of debts and duns, and never think of the final payment of our great debt to Nature. Art, we know, is long; life, we flatter ourselves, should be so too. We see no end of the difficulties and delays we have to encounter: perfection is slow of attainment, and we must have time to accomplish it in. The fame of the great names we look up to is immortal: and shall not we who contemplate it imbibe a portion of ethereal fire, the *divinæ particula auræ*, which nothing can extinguish? A wrinkle in Rembrandt or in Nature takes whole days to resolve itself into its component parts, its softenings and its sharpnesses; we refine upon our perfections, and unfold the intricacies of Nature. What a prospect for the future! What a task have we not begun! And shall we be arrested in the middle of it? We do not count our time thus employed lost, or our pains thrown away; we do not flag or grow tired, but gain new vigour at our endless task. Shall Time, then, grudge us to finish what we have begun, and have formed a compact with Nature to do? Why not fill up the blank that is left us in this manner? I have looked for hours at a Rembrandt without being conscious of the flight of time, but with ever-new wonder and delight, have thought that not only my own but another existence I could pass in the same manner. This rarefied, refined existence seemed to have no end, nor stint, nor principle of decay in it. The print would remain long after I who looked on it had become the prey of worms. The thing seems in itself out of all reason: health, strength, appetite, are opposed to the idea of death, and we are not ready to credit it till we have found our illusions vanished and our hopes grown cold. Objects in youth, from novelty, &c., are stamped upon the brain with such force and integrity that one thinks nothing can remove or obliterate them. They are riveted there, and appear to us as an element of our nature. It must be a mere violence that destroys them, not a natural decay. In the very strength of this persuasion we seem to enjoy an age by anticipation. We melt down years into a single moment of intense sympathy, and by anticipating the fruits defy the ravages of time. If, then, a single moment of our lives is worth years, shall we set any limits to its total value and extent? Again, does it not happen that so secure do we think ourselves of an indefinite period of existence, that

at times, when left to ourselves, and impatient of novelty, we feel annoyed at what seems to us the slow and creeping progress of time, and argue that if it always moves at this tedious snail's-pace it will never come to an end? How ready are we to sacrifice any space of time which separates us from a favourite object, little thinking that before long we shall find it move too fast!

For my part, I started in life with the French Revolution, and I have lived, alas! to see the end of it. But I did not foresee this result. My sun arose with the first dawn of liberty, and I did not think how soon both must set. The new impulse to ardour given to men's minds imparted a congenial warmth and glow to mine; we were strong to run a race together, and I little dreamed that long before mine was set the sun of liberty would turn to blood, or set once more in the night of despotism. Since then, I confess, I have no longer felt myself young, for with that my hopes fell.

I have since turned my thoughts to gathering up some of the fragments of my early recollections, and putting them into a form to which I might occasionally revert. The future was barred to my progress, and I turned for consolation and encouragement to the past. It is thus that, while we find our personal and substantial identity vanishing from us, we strive to gain a reflected and vicarious one in our thoughts: we do not like to perish wholly, and wish to bequeath our names, at least, to posterity. As long as we can make our cherished thoughts and nearest interests live in the minds of others, we do not appear to have retired altogether from the stage. We still occupy the breasts of others, and exert an influence and power over them, and it is only our bodies that are reduced to dust and powder. Our favourite speculations still find encouragement, and we make as great a figure in the eye of the world, or perhaps a greater, than in our lifetime. The demands of our self-love are thus satisfied, and these are the most imperious and unremitting. Besides, if by our intellectual superiority we survive ourselves in this world, by our virtues and faith we may attain an interest in another and a higher state of being, and may thus be recipients at the same time of men and of angels.

> "E'en from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
> E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires."

As we grow old, our sense of the value of time becomes vivid. Nothing else, indeed, seems of any consequence. We can never cease wondering that that which has ever been should cease to be. We find many things remain the same: why, then, should there be change in us? This adds a convulsive grasp of whatever is, a sense

of a fallacious hollowness in all we see. Instead of the full, pulpy feeling of youth tasting existence and every object in it, all is flat and vapid,—a whited sepulchre, fair without, but full of ravening and all uncleanness within. The world is a witch that puts us off with false shows and appearances. The simplicity of youth, the confiding expectation, the boundless raptures, are gone: we only think of getting out of it as well as we can, and without any great mischance or annoyance. The flush of illusion, even the complacent retrospect of past joys and hopes, is over: if we can slip out of life without indignity, can escape with little bodily infirmity, and frame our minds to the calm and respectable composure of *still-life* before we return to physical nothingness, it is as much as we can expect. We do not die wholly at our deaths: we have mouldered away gradually long before. Faculty after faculty, interest after interest, attachment after attachment, disappear: we are torn from ourselves while living, year after year sees us no longer the same, and death only consigns the last fragment of what we were to the grave. That we should wear out by slow stages, and dwindle at last into nothing, is not wonderful, when even in our prime our strongest impressions leave little trace but for the moment, and we are the creatures of petty circumstance. How little effect is made on us in our best days by the books we have read, the scenes we have witnessed, the sensations we have gone through! Think only of the feelings we experience in reading a fine romance (one of Sir Walter's, for instance); what beauty, what sublimity, what interest, what heart-rending emotions! You would suppose the feelings you then experienced would last for ever, or subdue the mind to their own harmony and tone: while we are reading, it seems as if nothing could ever put us out of our way or trouble us: —the first splash of mud that we get on entering the street, the first twopence we are cheated out of, the feeling vanishes clean out of our minds, and we become the prey of petty and annoying circumstance. The mind soars to the lofty: it is at home in the grovelling, the disagreeable, and the little. And yet we wonder that age should be feeble and querulous,—that the freshness of youth should fade away. Both worlds would hardly satisfy the extravagance of our desires and of our presumption.

[From the Essay, "Mind and Motive."]

. . . HAPPY are they who live in the dream of their own existence, and see all things in the light of their own minds; who walk by faith and hope; to whom the guiding star of their youth still shines from

afar, and into whom the spirit of the world has not entered! They have not been "hurt by the archers," nor has the iron entered their souls. They live in the midst of arrows and of death, unconscious of harm. The evil things come not nigh them. The shafts of ridicule pass unheeded by, and malice loses its sting. The example of vice does not rankle in their breasts, like the poisoned shirt of Nessus. Evil impressions fall off from them like drops of water. The yoke of life is to them light and supportable. The world has no hold on them. They are in it, not of it; and a dream and a glory is ever around them!

A FAREWELL TO ESSAY-WRITING.

[Written at Winterslow Hutt, Feb. 20, 1828.]

"This life is best, if quiet life is best."

Food, warmth, sleep, and a book; these are all I at present ask—the *ultima Thule* of my wandering desires. Do you not then wish for

"A friend in your retreat,
Whom you may whisper, solitude is sweet"?

Expected, well enough:—gone, still better. Such attractions are strengthened by distance. Nor a mistress? "Beautiful mask! I know thee!" When I can judge of the heart from the face, of the thoughts from the lips, I may again trust myself. Instead of these give me the robin red-breast, pecking the crumbs at the door, or warbling on the leafless spray, the same glancing form that has followed me wherever I have been, and "done its spiriting gently;" or the rich notes of the thrush that startle the ear of winter, and seem to have drunk up the full draught of joy from the very sense of contrast. To these I adhere, and am faithful, for they are true to me; and, dear in themselves, are dearer for the sake of what is departed, leading me back (by the hand) to that dreaming world, in the innocence of which they sat and made sweet music, waking the promise of future years, and answered by the eager throbbings of my own breast. But now "the credulous hope of mutual minds is o'er," and I turn back from the world, that has deceived me, to Nature, that lent it a false beauty, and that keeps up the illusion of the past. As I quaff my libations of tea in a morning, I love to watch the clouds sailing from the west, and fancy that "the spring comes slowly up this way." In this hope, while "fields are dank and ways are mire," I follow the same direction to a neighbouring wood, where, having gained the dry, level greensward, I can see my way

for a mile before me, closed in on each side by copse-wood, and ending in a point of light more or less brilliant, as the day is bright or cloudy. What a walk is this to me! I have no need of book or companion—the days, the hours, the thoughts of my youth are at my side, and blend with the air that fans my cheek. Here I can saunter for hours, bending my eye forward, stopping and turning to look back, thinking to strike off into some less-trodden path, yet hesitating to quit the one I am in, afraid to snap the brittle threads of memory. I remark the shining trunks and slender branches of the birch-trees, waving in the idle breeze; or a pheasant springs up on whirring wing; or I recall the spot where I once found a wood-pigeon at the foot of a tree, weltering in its gore, and think how many seasons have flown since "it left its little life in air." Dates, names, faces, come back—to what purpose? Or why think of them now? Or rather, why not think of them oftener? We walk through life, as through a narrow path, with a thin curtain drawn around it; behind are ranged rich portraits, airy harps are strung—yet we will not stretch forth our hands and lift aside the veil, to catch glimpses of the one or sweep the chords of the other. As in a theatre, when the old-fashioned green curtain drew up, groups of figures, fantastic dresses, laughing faces, rich banquets, stately columns, gleaming vistas, appeared beyond; so we have only at any time to "peep through the blanket of the past" to possess ourselves at once of all that has regaled our senses, that is stored up in our memory, that has struck our fancy, that has pierced our hearts:—yet to all this we are indifferent, insensible, and seem intent only on the present vexation, the future disappointment. If there is a Titian hanging up in the room with me, I scarcely regard it: how, then, should I be expected to strain the mental eye so far, or to throw down, by the magic spells of the will, the stone-walls that enclose it in the Louvre? There is one head there of which I have often thought, when looking at it, that nothing should ever disturb me again, and I would become the character it represents—such perfect calmness and self-possession reigns in it! Why do I not hang an image of this in some dusky corner of my brain, and turn an eye upon it ever and anon, as I have need of some such talisman to calm my troubled thoughts? The attempt is fruitless, if not natural; or, like that of the French, to hang garlands on the grave, and to conjure back the dead by miniature pictures of them while living! It is only some actual coincidence or local association that tends, without violence, to "open all the cells where memory slept." I can easily, by stooping over the long-sprent grass and clay-cold clod, recall the tufts of primroses or purple hyacinths that formerly

grew on the same spot, and cover the bushes with leaves and singing-birds, as they were eighteen summers ago; or prolonging my walk and hearing the sighing gale rustle through the tall, straight wood at the end of it, can fancy that I distinguish the cry of hounds, and the fatal group issuing from it, as in the tale of "Theodore and Honoria." A moaning gust of wind aids the belief; I look once more to see whether the trees before me answer to the idea of the horror-stricken grove, and an air-built city towers over their grey tops.

> "Of all the cities in Romanian lands,
> The chief and most renown'd Ravenna stands."

. . . .

I return home resolved to read the entire poem through, and after dinner, drawing my chair to the fire, and holding a small print close to my eyes, launch into the full tide of Dryden's couplets (a stream of sound), comparing his didactic and descriptive pomp with the simple pathos and picturesque truth of Boccaccio's story, and tasting with a pleasure which none but an habitual reader can feel some quaint examples of pronunciation in this accomplished versifier.

> "Which when Honoria view'd,
> The fresh *impulse* her former fright renew'd."

> "And made th' *insult*, which in his grief appears,
> The means to mourn thee with my pious tears."

These trifling instances of the wavering and unsettled state of the language give double effect to the firm and stately march of the verse, and make me dwell with a sort of tender interest on the difficulties and doubts of an earlier period of literature. . . .

What sometimes surprises me in looking back to the past is, with the exception already stated, to find myself so little changed in the time. The same images and trains of thought stick by me: I have the same tastes, likings, sentiments, and wishes that I had then One great ground of confidence and support has, indeed, been struck from under my feet; but I have made it up to myself by proportionable pertinacity of opinion. The success of the great cause to which I had vowed myself was to me more than all the world: I had a strength in its strength, a resource which I knew not of, till it failed me for the second time.

> "Fall'n was Glenartny's stately tree!
> Oh! ne'er to see Lord Ronald more!"

It was not till I saw the axe laid to the root that I found the full extent of what I had to lose and suffer. But my conviction of the right was only established by the triumph of the wrong; and my earliest hopes will be my last regrets. One source of this un-

bendingness (which some may call obstinacy) is, that, though living much alone, I have never worshipped the Echo. I see plainly enough that black is not white, that the grass is green, that kings are not their subjects; and, in such self-evident cases, do not think it necessary to collate my opinions with the received prejudices. In subtler questions, and matters that admit of doubt, as I do not impose my opinion on others without a reason, so I will not give up mine to them without a better reason; and a person calling me names, or giving himself airs of authority, does not convince me of his having taken more pains to find out the truth than I have, but the contrary. . . .

In matters of taste and feeling, one proof that my conclusions have not been quite shallow or hasty is the circumstance of their having been lasting. I have the same favourite books, pictures, passages, that I ever had: I may therefore presume that they will last me my life—nay, I may indulge a hope that my thoughts will survive me. This continuity of impression is the only thing on which I pride myself. Even Lamb, whose relish of certain things is as keen and earnest as possible, takes a surfeit of admiration, and I should be afraid to ask about his select authors or particular friends after a lapse of ten years. As to myself, any one knows where to have me. What I have once made up my mind to, I abide by to the end of the chapter. One cause of my independence of opinion is, I believe, the liberty I give to others, or the very diffidence and distrust of making converts. I should be an excellent man on a jury. I might say little, but should starve "the other eleven obstinate fellows" out. . . . I have not sought to make partisans, still less did I dream of making enemies; and have therefore kept my opinions myself, whether they were currently adopted or not. To get others to come into our ways of thinking, we must go over to theirs; and it is necessary to follow in order to lead. At the time I lived here formerly, I had no suspicion that I should ever become a voluminous writer, yet I had just the same confidence in my feelings before I had ventured to air them in public as I have now. Neither the outcry *for* or *against* moves me a jot; I do not say that the one is not more agreeable than the other.

Not far from the spot where I write, I first read Chaucer's "Flower and Leaf," and was charmed with that young beauty, shrouded in her bower, and listening with ever-fresh delight to the repeated song of the nightingale close by her—the impression of the scene, the vernal landscape, the cool of the morning, the gushing notes of the songstress,

"And ayen methought she sung close by mine ear,"

is as vivid as if it had been of yesterday; and nothing can persuade me that that is not a fine poem. I do not find this impression conveyed in Dryden's version, and therefore nothing can persuade me that that is as fine. I used to walk out at this time with Mr. and Miss Lamb of an evening, to look at the Claude Lorraine skies over our heads melting from azure into purple and gold, and to gather mushrooms, that sprang up at our feet, to throw into our hashed mutton at supper. I was at that time an enthusiastic admirer of Claude, and could dwell for ever on one or two of the finest prints from him hung round my little room; the fleecy flocks, the bending trees, the winding streams, the groves, the nodding temples, the air-wove hills, and distant sunny vales; and tried to translate them into their lovely living hues. . . .

It is in looking back to such scenes that I draw my best consolation for the future. Later impressions come and go, and serve to fill up the intervals; but these are my standing resource, my true classics. If I have had few real pleasures or advantages, my ideas, from their sinewy texture, have been to me in the nature of realities; and if I should not be able to add to the stock, I can live by husbanding the interest. As to my speculations, there is little to admire in them but my admiration of others; and whether they have an echo in time to come or not, I have learned to set a grateful value on the past, and am content to wind up the account of what is personal only to myself and the immediate circle of objects in which I have moved, with an act of easy oblivion,

"And curtain-close such scene from every future view."

THE SICK-CHAMBER.

This is the last Essay which Hazlitt wrote—not many weeks before his death, apparently. It is now reprinted from *The New Monthly Magazine*, August 1830. He died on 18th September of the same year. It is remarkable that the two last lines of this his final contribution to literature should be a tribute to books:—"They are the first and last, the most home-felt, the most heart-felt, of all our enjoyments!"]

What a difference between this subject and my last—a "Free Admission!" Yet from the crowded theatre to the sick-chamber, from the noise, the glare, the keen delight, to the loneliness, the darkness, the dulness, and the pain, there is but one step. A

breath of air, an overhanging cloud effects it; and though the transition is made in an instant, it seems as if it would last for ever. A sudden illness not only puts a stop to the career of our triumphs and agreeable sensations, but blots out and cancels all recollection of and desire for them. We lose the relish of enjoyment; we are effectually cured of our romance. Our bodies are confined to our beds; nor can our thoughts wantonly detach themselves and take the road to pleasure, but turn back with doubt and loathing at the faint, evanescent phantom which has usurped its place. If the folding-doors of the imagination were thrown open or left ajar, so that from the disordered couch where we lay we could still hail the vista of the past or future, and see the gay and gorgeous visions floating at a distance, however denied to our embrace, the contrast, though mortifying, might have something soothing in it, the mock-splendour might be the greater for the actual gloom: but the misery is, that we cannot conceive anything beyond or better than the present evil; we are shut up and spell-bound in that, the curtains of the mind are drawn close, we cannot escape from "the body of this death," our souls are conquered, dismayed, "cooped and cabined in," and thrown with the lumber of our corporeal frames in one corner of a neglected and solitary room. We hate ourselves and everything else; nor does one ray of comfort "peep through the blanket of the dark" to give us hope. How should we entertain the image of grace and beauty, when our bodies writhe with pain? To what purpose invoke the echo of some rich strain of music, when we ourselves can scarcely breathe? The very attempt is an impossibility. We give up the vain task of linking delight to agony, of urging torpor into ecstasy, which makes the very heart sick. We feel the present pain, and an impatient longing to get rid of it. This were indeed "a consummation devoutly to be wished:" on this we are intent, in earnest, inexorable: all else is impertinence and folly; and could we but obtain *ease* (that goddess of the infirm and suffering) at any price, we think we could forswear all other joy and all other sorrows. *Hoc erat in votis.* All other things but our disorder and its cure seem less than nothing and vanity. It assumes a palpable form; it becomes a demon, a spectre, an incubus hovering over and oppressing us: we grapple with it: it strikes its fangs into us, spreads its arms round us, infects us with its breath, glares upon us with its hideous aspect; we feel it take possession of every fibre and of every faculty; and we are at length so absorbed and fascinated by it, that we cannot divert our reflections from it for an instant, for all other things but pain (and that which we suffer

most acutely) appear to have lost their pith and power to interest. They are turned to dust and stubble. This is the reason of the fine resolutions we sometimes form in such cases, and of the vast superiority of a sick-bed to the pomps and thrones of the world. We easily renounce wine when we have nothing but the taste of physic in our mouths: the rich banquet tempts us not, when "our very gorge rises" within us: Love and Beauty fly from a bed twisted into a thousand folds by restless lassitude and tormenting cares: the nerve of pleasure is killed by the pains that shoot through the head or rack the limbs: an indigestion seizes you with its leaden grasp and giant force (down, Ambition!)—you shiver and tremble like a leaf in a fit of the ague (Avarice, let go your palsied hold!). We then are in the mood, without ghostly advice, to betake ourselves to the life of "hermit poor,

"In pensive place obscure,"—

and should be glad to prevent the return of a fever raging in the blood by feeding on pulse and slaking our thirst at the limpid brook. These sudden resolutions, however, or "vows made in pain as violent and void," are generally of short duration: the excess and the sorrow for it are alike selfish; and those repentances which are the most loud and passionate are the surest to end speedily in a relapse; for both originate in the same cause, the being engrossed by the prevailing feeling (whatever it may be), and an utter incapacity to look beyond it.

> "The Devil was sick, the Devil a monk would be:
> The Devil grew well, the Devil a monk was he!"

It is amazing how little effect physical suffering or local circumstances have upon the mind, except while we are subject to their immediate influence. While the impression lasts, they are everything: when it is gone, they are nothing. We toss and tumble about in a sick-bed; we lie on our right side, we then change to the left; we stretch ourselves on our backs, we turn on our faces; we wrap ourselves up under the clothes to exclude the cold, we throw them off to escape the heat and suffocation; we grasp the pillow in agony, we fling ourselves out of bed, we walk up and down the room with hasty or feeble steps; we return into bed; we are worn out with fatigue and pain, yet can get no repose for the one, or intermission for the other; we summon all our patience, or give vent to passion and petty rage: nothing avails; we seem wedded to our disease, "like life and death in disproportion met;" we make new efforts, try new expedients, but nothing appears to shake it off,

or promise relief from our grim foe: it infixes its sharp sting into us, or overpowers us by its sickly and stunning weight: every moment is as much as we can bear, and yet there seems no end of our lengthening tortures; we are ready to faint with exhaustion, or work ourselves up to frenzy; we "trouble deaf Heaven with our bootless prayers;" we think our last hour is come, or peevishly wish it were, to put an end to this scene; we ask questions as to the origin of evil and the necessity of pain; we "moralise our complaints into a thousand similes;" we deny the use of medicine *in toto*, we have a full persuasion that all doctors are mad or knaves, that our object is to gain relief, and theirs (out of the perversity of human nature, or to seem wiser than we) to prevent it; we catechise the apothecary, rail at the nurse, and cannot so much as conceive the possibility that this state of things should not last for ever; we are even angry at those who would give us encouragement, as if they would make dupes or children of us; we might seek a release by poison, a halter, or the sword, but we have not strength of mind enough—our nerves are too shaken—to attempt even this poor revenge—when lo! a change comes, the spell falls off, and the next moment we forget all that has happened to us. No sooner does our disorder turn its back upon us than we laugh at it. The state we have been in sounds like a dream, a fable: health is the order of the day, strength is ours *de jure* and *de facto;* and we discard all uncalled-for evidence to the contrary with a smile of contemptuous incredulity, just as we throw our physic-bottles out of the window! I see (as I awake from a short, uneasy doze) a golden light shine through my white window-curtains on the opposite wall:—is it the dawn of a new day, or the departing light of evening? I do not well know, for the opium "they have drugged my posset with" has made strange havoc with my brain, and I am uncertain whether time has stood still, or advanced, or gone backward. By "puzzling o'er the doubt," my attention is drawn a little out of myself to external objects; and I consider whether it would not administer some relief to my monotonous languor if I could call up a vivid picture of an evening sky I witnessed a short while before, the white fleecy clouds, the azure vault, the verdant fields and balmy air. In vain! the wings of fancy refuse to mount from my bedside. The air without has nothing in common with the closeness within: the clouds disappear, the sky is instantly overcast and black. I walk out in this scene soon after I recover; and with those favourite and well-known objects interposed, can no longer recall the tumbled pillow, the juleps or the labels, or the unwholesome dungeon in which I was before immured. What is contrary to our present

sensations or settled habits, amalgamates indifferently with our belief: the imagination rules over imaginary themes; the senses and custom have a narrower sway, and admit but one guest at a time. It is hardly to be wondered at that we dread physical calamities so little beforehand: we think no more of them the moment after they have happened. *Out of sight, out of mind.* This will perhaps explain why all actual punishment has so little effect; it is a state contrary to nature, alien to the will. If it does not touch honour and conscience (and where these are not, how can it touch them?) it goes for nothing: and where these are, it rather sears and hardens them. The gyves, the cell, the meagre fare, the hard labour, are abhorrent to the mind of the culprit on whom they are imposed, who carries the love of liberty or indulgence to licentiousness; and who throws the thought of them behind him (the moment he can evade the penalty) with scorn and laughter,

"Like Samson his green wythes."

So, in travelling, we often meet with great fatigue and inconvenience from heat or cold, or other accidents, and resolve never to go a journey again; but we are ready to set off on a new excursion to-morrow. We remember the landscape, the change of scene, the romantic expectation, and think no more of the heat, the noise, and dust. The body forgets its grievances, till they recur; but imagination, passion, pride, have a longer memory and quicker apprehensions. To the first the pleasure or the pain is nothing when once over; to the last it is only then that they begin to exist. The line in Metastasio,

"The worst of every evil is the fear,"

is true only when applied to this latter sort.—It is curious that, on coming out of a sick-room, where one has been pent some time, and grown weak and nervous, and looking at Nature for the first time, the objects that present themselves have a very questionable and spectral appearance; the people in the street resemble flies crawling about, and seem scarce half-alive. It is we who are just risen from a torpid and unwholesome state, and who impart our imperfect feelings of existence, health, and motion to others. Or it may be that the violence and exertion of the pain we have gone through make common every-day objects seem unreal and unsubstantial. It is not till we have established ourselves in form in the sitting-room, wheeled round the arm-chair to the fire (for this makes part of our reintroduction to the ordinary modes of being in all seasons), felt our appetite return, and taken up a book, that we can be con-

sidered as at all restored to ourselves. And even then our first sensations are rather empirical than positive; as after sleep we stretch out our hands to know whether we are awake. This is the time for reading. Books are then indeed "a world, both pure and good," into which we enter with all our hearts, after our revival from illness and respite from the tomb, as with the freshness and novelty of youth. They are not merely acceptable as without too much exertion they pass the time and relieve *ennui;* but from a certain suspension and deadening of the passions, and abstraction from worldly pursuits, they may be said to bring back and be friendly to the guileless and enthusiastic tone of feeling with which we formerly read them. Sickness has weaned us *pro tempore* from contest and cabal; and we are fain to be docile and children again. All strong changes in our present pursuits throw us back upon the past. This is the shortest and most complete emancipation from our late discomfiture. We wonder that any one who has read "The History of a Foundling" should labour under an indigestion; nor do we comprehend how a perusal of the "Faery Queen" should not ensure the true believer an uninterrupted succession of halcyon days. Present objects bear a retrospective meaning, and point to "a foregone conclusion. Returning back to life with half-strung nerves and shattered strength, we seem as when we first entered it with uncertain purposes and faltering aims. The machine has received a shock, and it moves on more tremulously than before, and not all at once in the beaten track. Startled at the approach of death, we are willing to get as far from it as we can by making a proxy of our former selves; and finding the precarious tenure by which we hold existence, and its last sands running out, we gather up and make the most of the fragments that memory has stored up for us. Everything is seen through a medium of reflection and contrast. We hear the sound of merry voices in the street; and this carries us back to the recollections of some country-town or village-group—

> "We see the children sporting on the shore,
> And hear the mighty waters roaring evermore."

A cricket chirps on the hearth, and we are reminded of Christmas gambols long ago. The very cries in the street seem to be of a former date; and the dry toast eats very much as it did—twenty years ago. A rose smells doubly sweet, after being stifled with tinctures and essences; and we enjoy the idea of a journey and an inn the more for having been bed-rid. But a book is the secret and sure charm to bring all these implied associations to a focus. I should prefer an old one, Mr. Lamb's favourite, the "Journey to

Lisbon," or the "Decameron," if I could get it; but if a new one, let it be "Paul Clifford." That book has the singular advantage of being written by a gentleman, and not about his own class. The characters he commemorates are every moment at fault between life and death, hunger and a *forced loan* on the public; and therefore the interest they take in themselves, and which we take in them, has no cant or affectation in it, but is "lively, audible, and full of vent." A set of well-dressed gentlemen picking their teeth with a graceful air after dinner, endeavouring to keep their cravats from the slightest discomposure, and saying the most insipid things in the most insipid manner, do not make *a scene*. Well, then, I have got the new paraphrase on the "Beggar's Opera," am fairly embarked in it; and at the end of the first volume, where I am galloping across the heath with the three highwaymen, while the moon is shining full upon them, feel my nerves so braced, and my spirits so exhilarated, that, to say truth, I am scarce sorry for the occasion that has thrown me upon the work and the author—have quite forgot my *Sick-Room*, and am more than half ready to recant the doctrine that a *Free-Admission* to the theatre is

> "The true pathos and sublime
> Of human life:"—

for I feel as I read, that if the stage shows us the masks of men and the pageant of the world, books let us into their souls and lay open to us the secrets of our own. They are the first and last, the most home-felt, the most heart-felt of all our enjoyments!

[*Characteristics, in the Manner of Rochefoucald's Maxims*, 1823. Second Edition, with Preface by R. H. Horne, 1837. Third Edition, 1871, with the addition of *Common-Places*, from Hunt's *Literary Examiner*, 1827, and *Trifles Light as Air*, from the Atlas newspaper, 1829.]

CHARACTERISTICS.

What makes it so difficult to do justice to others is, that we are hardly sensible of merit unless it falls in with our own views and line of pursuit; and where this is the case it interferes with our own pretentions. To be forward to praise others implies either great eminence, that can afford to part with applause, or great quickness of discernment, with confidence in our own judgments; or great sincerity and love of truth, getting the better of our self-love.

Envy is a littleness of soul, which cannot see beyond a certain point, and if it does not occupy the whole space feels itself excluded.

We are more jealous of frivolous accomplishments with brilliant success, than of the most estimable qualities without it. Dr. Johnson envied Garrick, whom he despised, and ridiculed Goldsmith, whom he loved.

Some there are who can only find out in us those good qualities which nobody else has discovered: as there are others who make a point of crying up our deserts, after all the rest of the world have agreed to do so. The first are patrons, not friends: the last are not friends, but sycophants.

We judge of others for the most part by their good opinion of themselves: yet nothing gives such offence, or creates so many enemies, as that extreme self-complacency or superciliousness of manner, which appears to set the opinion of every one else at defiance.

The surest way to make ourselves agreeable to others is by seeming to think them so. If we appear fully sensible of their good qualities, they will not complain of the want of them in us.

Silence is one great art of conversation. He is not a fool who knows when to hold his tongue; and a person may gain credit for sense, eloquence, wit, who merely says nothing to lessen the opinion which others have of these qualities in themselves.

We sometimes hate those who differ from us in opinion worse than we should for an attempt to injure us in the most serious point. A favourite theory is a possession for life; and we resent any attack upon it proportionably.

Simplicity of character is the natural result of profound thought.

There is neither so much vice nor so much virtue in the world as it might appear at first sight that there is. Many people commit actions that they hate, as they affect virtues that they laugh at, merely because others do so.

We are never so much disposed to quarrel with others as when we are dissatisfied with ourselves.

A person who talks with equal vivacity on every subject, excites no interest in any. Repose is as necessary in conversation as in a picture.

Surly natures have more pleasure in disobliging others than in serving themselves.

People in general consult their prevailing humour or ruling passion (whatever it may be) much more than their interest.

The throwing out malicious imputations against any character leaves a stain which no after-reputation can wipe out. To create an unfavourable impression, it is not necessary that certain things should be true, but that they have been said. The imagination is of so delicate a texture, that even words wound it.

Want of principle is power. Truth and honesty set a limit to our efforts, which impudence and hypocrisy easily overleap.

We find persons who are actuated in all their tastes and feelings by a spirit of contradiction. They like nothing that other people do, and have a natural aversion to whatever is agreeable in itself. They read books that no one else reads, and are delighted with passages that no one understands but themselves. They only arrive at beauties through faults and difficulties, and all their conceptions are brought to light by a sort of Cæsarean process.

It is a fine remark of Rousseau's that the best of us differ from others in fewer particulars than we agree with them in. The difference between a tall and a short man is only a few inches, whereas they are both several feet high. So a wise or learned man knows many things of which the vulgar are ignorant; but there is a still greater number of things the knowledge of which they share in common with him.

To be capable of steady friendship or lasting love, are the two

greatest proofs, not only of goodness of heart, but of strength of mind.

To think ill of mankind, and not wish ill to them, is perhaps the highest wisdom and virtue.

There is nothing that I so hate as I do to hear a commonplace set up against a feeling of truth and nature.

The best kind of conversation is that which is made up of observations, reflections, and anecdotes. A string of stories without application is as tiresome as a long-winded argument.

The greatest offence against virtue is to speak ill of it. To recommend certain things is worse than to practise them. There may be an excuse for the last in the frailty of passion; but the former can arise from nothing but an utter depravity of disposition. Any one may yield to temptation, and yet feel a sincere love and aspiration after virtue; but he who maintains vice in theory, has not even the idea or capacity for virtue in his mind. Men err: fiends only make a mock at goodness.

Health and good-temper are the two greatest blessings in life. In all the rest men are equal, or find an equivalent.

The best lesson we can learn from witnessing the folly of mankind is not to irritate ourselves against it.

When we hear complaints of the wretchedness or vanity of human life, the proper answer to them would be, that there is hardly any one who at some time or other has not been in love. If we consider the high abstraction of this feeling, its depth, its purity, its voluptuous refinement, even in the meanest breast, how sacred and how sweet it is, this alone may reconcile us to the lot of humanity. That drop of balm turns the bitter cup to a delicious nectar—

"And vindicates the ways of God to man."

We are very much what others think of us. The reception our

observations meet with gives us courage to proceed or damps our efforts. A man is a wit and a philosopher in one place who dares not open his mouth and is considered as a blockhead in another. In some companies nothing will go down but coarse practical jests, while the finest remark or sarcasm would be disregarded.

People sometimes complain that you do not talk, when they have not given you an opportunity to utter a word for a whole evening. The real ground of disappointment has been, that you have not shown a sufficient degree of attention to what they have said.

The seat of knowledge is in the head; of wisdom, in the heart. We are sure to judge wrong if we do not feel right.

An honest man speaks truth, *though* it may give offence; a vain man, *in order that* it may.

He will never have true friends who is afraid of making enemies.

The way to procure insults is to submit to them. A man meets with no more respect than he exacts.

Those who can command themselves command others.

The last pleasure in life is the sense of discharging our duty.

Those who are fond of setting things to rights have no great objection to seeing them wrong. There is often a good deal of spleen at the bottom of benevolence.

There are some persons who never succeed, from being too indolent to undertake anything; and others who regularly fail, because the instant they find success in their power, they grow indifferent and give over the attempt.

COMMONPLACES.

The art of life is to know how to enjoy a little and to endure much.

Liberty is the only true riches: of all the rest we are at once the masters and the slaves.

[*Essays on the Fine Arts, by William Hazlitt, edited by W. C. Hazlitt*, 1873. This volume consists of a reprint of almost all Hazlitt's writings on Art, included among his miscellaneous essays. Some of them are from periodicals long since extinct. It also contains a reprint of two special works: *Sketches of the Principal Picture Galleries in England*, 1824, and *The Fine Arts*, an article contributed to the Seventh Edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (first separately published along with the article *Painting* by B. R. Haydon, in 1838). Three articles are given from Hazlitt's contributions to the *Edinburgh Review*,—on Sir Joshua Reynolds, Salvator Rosa, and Flaxman, the sculptor. The collection would have been more complete had it included the Essays, "On the Works of Hogarth; On the Grand and Familiar Style of Painting," "On the Pleasure of Painting," "On a Landscape of Nicholas Poussin," "On Certain Inconsistencies in Sir Joshua Reynolds' Discourses," and "On the Progress of Art," which appeared in *The English Comic Writers*, *Table-Talk*, and other volumes.

THE WORKS OF HOGARTH; ON THE GRAND AND FAMILIAR STYLE OF PAINTING.

[This Essay will be found in its complete form in *Lectures on the English Comic Writers*. Although this and the succeeding paper are not included in the volume, *Essays on The Fine Arts*, described above, I here reprint a considerable portion of both; this being their most suitable place.]

If the quantity of amusement, or of matter for more serious reflection which their works have afforded, is that by which we are to judge of precedence among the intellectual benefactors of mankind, there are, perhaps, few persons who can put in a stronger claim to our gratitude than Hogarth. It is not hazarding too much to assert, that he was one of the greatest comic geniuses that ever lived, and he was certainly one of the most extraordinary men this country has produced. The wonderful knowledge which he possessed of human life and manners is only to be surpassed (if it can be) by the power of invention with which he has combined and contrasted his materials in the most ludicrous and varied points of view, and by the mastery of execution with which he has embodied and made tangible the very thoughts and passing movements of the mind. Critics sometimes object to the style of Hogarth's pictures, or to the class to which they belong. First, he belongs to no class, or, if he does, it is to the same class as Fielding, Smollett, Vanbrugh and Molière. Besides, the merit of his pictures does not depend on the nature of the subject, but on the knowledge displayed of it, on the number of ideas they excite, on the fund of thought and observa-

tion contained in them. They are to be studied as works of science as well as of amusement; they satisfy our love of truth; they fill up the void in the mind; they form a series of plates in natural history, and of that most interesting part of natural history, the history of our own species. Make what deductions you please for the vulgarity of the subject, yet in the research, the profundity, the absolute truth and precision of the delineation of character; in the invention of incident, in wit and humour; in the life with which they are "instinct in every part;" in everlasting variety and originality, they never have been, and probably never will be, surpassed. They stimulate the faculties as well as soothe them. "Other pictures we see, Hogarth's we read."* . . .

What distinguishes his compositions from all others of the same general kind is, that they are equally remote from caricature and from mere still life. It, of course, happens in subjects taken from common life, that the painter can procure real models, and he can get them to sit as long as he pleases. Hence, in general, those attitudes and expressions have been chosen which could be assumed the longest; and in imitating which the artist, by taking pains and time, might produce almost as complete *fac-similes* as he could of a flower or a flower-pot, of a damask curtain or a china vase. The copy was as perfect and as uninteresting in the one case as in the other. On the contrary, subjects of drollery and ridicule affording frequent examples of strange deformity and peculiarity of features, these have been eagerly seized by another class of artists, who, without subjecting themselves to the laborious drudgery of the Dutch school and their imitators, have produced our popular caricatures by rudely copying or exaggerating the casual irregularities of the human countenance. Hogarth has equally avoided the faults of both these styles so as to give to the productions of his pencil equal solidity and effect. For his faces go to the very verge of caricature, and yet never (I believe in any single instance) go beyond it: they take the very widest latitude, and yet we always see the links which bind them to nature: they bear all the marks and carry all the conviction of reality with them, as if we had seen the actual faces for the first time, from the precision, consistency, and good sense with which the whole and every part is made out. They exhibit the most uncommon features with the most uncommon expressions, but which yet are as familiar and intelligible as possible, because, with all the boldness, they have all the truth, of nature. Hogarth has left behind him as many of these memorable faces in their memorable moments as, perhaps, most of us remember in the

* See the admirable *Essay on the Genius of Hogarth* by Charles Lamb.

course of our lives, and has thus doubled the quantity of our experience. . . .

I have promised to say something in this Lecture on the difference between the grand and familiar style of painting; and I shall throw out what imperfect hints I have been able to collect on this subject, so often attempted, and never yet succeeded in, taking the examples and illustrations from Hogarth, that is, from what he possessed or wanted in each kind.

And first, the difference is not that between imitation and invention; for there is as much of this last quality in Hogarth as in any painter or poet whatever. As, for example, to take two of his pictures only, I mean the "Enraged Musician" and the "Gin Lane;" in one of which every conceivable variety of disagreeable and discordant sound—the razor-grinder turning his wheel; the boy with his drum, and the girl with her rattle momentarily suspended; the pursuivant blowing his horn; the shrill milkwoman; the inexorable ballad-singer, with her squalling infant; the pewterer's shop close by; the fishwomen; the chimney-sweepers at the top of a chimney, and the two cats in melodious concert on the ridge of the tiles; with the bells ringing in the distance, as we see by the flags flying;—and in the other, the complicated forms and signs of death and ruinous decay—the woman on the stairs of the bridge asleep, letting her child fall over; her ghastly companion opposite, next to death's door, with hollow, famished cheeks and staring ribs; the dog fighting with the man for the bare shin-bone; the man hanging himself in a garret; the female corpse put into a coffin by the parish beadle; the men marching after a funeral, seen through a broken wall in the background; and the very houses reeling as if drunk and tumbling about the ears of the infatuated victims below, the pawnbroker's being the only one that stands firm and unimpaired—enforce the moral meant to be conveyed by each of these pieces with a richness and research of combination and artful contrast not easily paralleled in any production of the pencil or the pen. The clock pointing to four in the morning, in "Modern Midnight Conversation," just as the immovable Parson Ford is filling out another glass from a brimming punch-bowl, while most of his companions, with the exception of the sly lawyer, are falling around him "like leaves in October;" and again, the extraordinary mistake of the man leaning against the post, in the "Lord Mayor's Procession," show a mind capable of seizing the most rare and transient coincidences of things, of imagining what either never happened at all, or of instantly fixing on and applying to its purpose what never happened but once. So far, the invention shown in the great style of painting is poor in the

comparison. Indeed, grandeur is supposed (whether rightly or not I shall not here inquire) to imply a simplicity inconsistent with this inexhaustible variety of incident and circumstantial detail.

Secondly, the difference between the ideal and familiar style is not to be explained by the difference between the genteel and vulgar; for it is evident that Hogarth was almost as much at home in the genteel comedy as in the broad farce of his pictures. He excelled not only in exhibiting the coarse humours and disgusting incidents of low life, but in exhibiting the vices, follies, and frivolity of the fashionable manners of his time: his fine ladies hardly yield the palm to his waiting-maids, and his lords and his footmen are on a respectable footing of equality. There is no want, for example, in the "Marriage-à-la-Mode," or in "Taste in High Life," of affectation verging into idiotism, or of languid sensibility that might—

"Die of a rose in aromatic pain."

In short, Hogarth was a painter not of low, but of actual life; and the ridiculous and prominent features of high or low life, of the great vulgar or the small, lay equally open to him. The Country Girl, in the first plate of the "Harlot's Progress," coming out of the waggon, is not more simple and ungainly than the same figure, in the second, is thoroughly initiated into the mysteries of her art, and suddenly accomplished in all the airs and graces of affectation, ease, and impudence. The affected languor and imbecility of the same girl afterwards, when put to beat hemp in Bridewell, is exactly in keeping with the character she had been taught to assume. Sir Joshua could do nothing like it in his line of portrait, which differed chiefly in the background. The fine gentleman at his levee, in the "Rake's Progress," is also a complete model of a person of rank and fortune, surrounded by needy and worthless adventurers, fiddlers, poetasters, and virtuosi, as was the custom in those days. Lord Chesterfield himself would not have been disgraced by sitting for it. I might multiply examples to show that Hogarth was not characteristically deficient in that kind of elegance which arises from an habitual attention to external appearance and deportment. I will only add as instances, among his women, the two *elégantes* in the Bedlam scene, who are dressed (allowing for the difference of not quite a century) in the manner of Ackerman's dresses for May; and among the men, the Lawyer in "Modern Midnight Conversation," whose gracious significant leer and sleek lubricated countenance exhibit all the happy finesse of his profession, when a silk gown has been added, or is likely to be added, to it; and several figures in the

"Cockpit," who are evidently, at the first glance, gentlemen of the old school, and where the mixture of the blacklegs with the higher character is a still further test of the discriminating skill of the painter.

ON THE PLEASURE OF PAINTING.

[This Essay will be found in its complete form in *Table-Talk*.]

"THERE is a pleasure in painting which none but painters know." In writing, you have to contend with the world; in painting, you have only to carry on a friendly strife with Nature. You sit down to your task, and are happy. From the moment that you take up the pencil, and look Nature in the face, you are at peace with your own heart. No angry passions rise to disturb the silent progress of the work, to shake the hand, or dim the brow: no irritable humours are set afloat: you have no absurd opinions to combat, no point to strain, no adversary to crush, no fool to annoy—you are actuated by fear or favour to no man. There is "no juggling here," no sophistry, no intrigue, no tampering with the evidence, no attempt to make black white, or white black: but you resign yourself into the hands of a greater power, that of Nature, with the simplicity of a child, and the devotion of an enthusiast—"study with joy her manner, and with rapture taste her style." The mind is calm, and full at the same time. The hand and eye are equally employed. In tracing the commonest object, a plant or the stump of a tree, you learn something every moment. You perceive unexpected differences, and discover likenesses where you looked for no such thing. You try to set down what you see—find out your error and correct it. You need not play tricks, or purposely mistake: with all your pains, you are still far short of the mark. Patience grows out of the endless pursuit, and turns it into a luxury. A streak in a flower, a wrinkle in a leaf, a tinge in a cloud, a stain in an old wall or ruin grey, are seized with avidity as the *spolia opima* of this sort of mental warfare, and furnish out labour for another half-day. The hours pass away untold, without chagrin, and without weariness; nor would you ever wish to pass them otherwise. Innocence is joined with industry, pleasure with business; and the mind is satisfied, though it is not engaged in thinking or in doing any mischief. . . .

After I have once written on a subject, it goes out of my mind: my feelings about it have been melted down into words, and them I forget. I have, as it were, discharged my memory of its old

habitual reckoning, and rubbed out the score of real sentiment. For the future, it exists only for the sake of others.—But I cannot say, from my own experience, that the same process takes place in transferring our ideas to canvas; they gain more than they lose in the mechanical transformation. One is never tired of painting, because you have to set down not what you knew already but what you have just discovered. In the former case, you translate feelings into words; in the latter, names into things. There is a continual creation out of nothing going on. With every stroke of the brush, a new field of inquiry is laid open; new difficulties arise, and new triumphs are prepared over them. By comparing the imitation with the original, you see what you have done, and how much you have still to do. The test of the senses is severer than that of fancy, and an overmatch even for the delusions of our self-love. One part of a picture shames another, and you determine to paint up to yourself, if you cannot come up to nature. Every object becomes lustrous from the light thrown back upon it by the mirror of art: and by the aid of the pencil we may be said to touch and handle the objects of sight. The air-drawn visions that hover on the verge of existence have a bodily presence given them on the canvas: the form of beauty is changed into a substance: the dream and the glory of the universe is made "palpable to feeling as to sight."—And see! a rainbow starts from the canvas, with all its humid train of glory, as if it were drawn from its cloudy arch in heaven. The spangled landscape glitters with drops of dew after the shower. The "fleecy fools" show their coats in the gleams of the setting sun. The shepherds pipe their farewell notes in the fresh evening air. And is this bright vision made from a dead dull blank, like a bubble reflecting the mighty fabric of the universe? Who would think this miracle of Rubens' pencil possible to be performed? Who, having seen it, would not spend his life to do the like? See how the rich fallows, the bare stubble-field, the scanty harvest-home, drag in Rembrandt's landscapes! How often have I looked at them and nature, and tried to do the same, till the very "light thickened," and there was an earthiness in the feeling of the air! There is no end of the refinements of art and nature in this respect. One may look at the misty glimmering horizon till the eye dazzles and the imagination is lost, in hopes to transfer the whole interminable expanse at one blow upon the canvas. Wilson said, he used to try to paint the effect of the motes dancing in the setting sun. At another time, a friend, coming into his painting-room when he was sitting on the ground in a melancholy posture, observed that his picture looked

like a landscape after a shower: he started up with the greatest delight, and said, "That is the effect I intended to produce, but thought I had failed." Wilson was neglected; and, by degrees, neglected his art to apply himself to brandy. His hand became unsteady, so that it was only by repeated attempts that he could reach the place, or produce the effect he aimed at; and when he had done a little to a picture, he would say to any acquaintance who chanced to drop in, "I have painted enough for one day: come, let us somewhere." It was not so Claude left his pictures, or his studies on the banks of the Tiber, to go in search of other enjoyments, or ceased to gaze upon the glittering sunny vales and distant hills; and while his eye drank in the clear sparkling hues and lovely forms of nature, his hand stamped them on the lucid canvas to last there for ever! One of the most delightful parts of my life was one fine summer, when I used to walk out of an evening to catch the last light of the sun, gemming the green slopes or russet lawns, and gilding tower or tree, while the blue sky gradually turning to purple and gold, or skirted with dusky grey, hung its broad marble pavement over all, as we see it in the great master of Italian landscape. But to come to a more particular explanation of the subject:—

The first head I ever tried to paint was an old woman with the upper part of the face shaded by her bonnet, and I certainly laboured [at] it with great perseverance. It took me numberless sittings to do it. I have it by me still, and sometimes look at it with surprise, to think how much pains were thrown away to little purpose,—yet not altogether in vain if it taught me to see good in everything, and to know that there is nothing vulgar in nature seen with the eye of science or of true art. Refinement creates beauty everywhere: it is the grossness of the spectator that discovers nothing but grossness in the object. Be this as it may, I spared no pains to do my best. If art was long, I thought that life was so too at that moment. I got in the general effect the first day; and pleased and surprised enough I was at my success. The rest was a work of time—of weeks and months (if need were), of patient toil and careful finishing. I had seen an old head by Rembrandt at Burleigh House, and if I could produce a head at all like Rembrandt in a year, in my lifetime, it would be glory and felicity and wealth and fame enough for me! The head I had seen at Burleigh was an exact and wonderful fac-simile of nature, and I resolved to make mine (as nearly as I could) an exact fac-simile of nature. I did not then, nor do I now, believe, with Sir Joshua, that the perfection of art consists in giving

general appearances without individual details, but in giving general appearances with individual details. Otherwise, I had done my work the first day. But I saw something more in nature than general effect, and I thought it worth my while to give it in the picture. There was a gorgeous effect of light and shade: but there was a delicacy as well as depth in the *chiaro scuro* which I was bound to follow into all its dim and scarce perceptible variety of tone and shadow. Then I had to make the transition from a strong light to as dark a shade, preserving the masses, but gradually softening off the intermediate parts. It was so in nature; the difficulty was to make it so in the copy. I tried, and failed again and again; I strove harder, and succeeded as I thought. The wrinkles in Rembrandt were not hard lines, but broken and irregular. I saw the same appearance in nature, and strained every nerve to give it. If I could hit off this edgy appearance, and insert the reflected light in the furrows of old age in half a morning, I did not think I had lost a day. Beneath the shrivelled yellow parchment look of the skin, there was here and there a streak of the blood-colour tinging the face; this I made a point of conveying, and did not cease to compare what I saw with what I did (with jealous lynx-eyed watchfulness) till I succeeded to the best of my ability and judgment. How many revisions were there! How many attempts to catch an expression which I had seen the day before! How often did we try to get the old position, and wait for the return of the same light! There was a puckering-up of the lips, a cautious introversion of the eye under the shadow of the bonnet, indicative of the feebleness and suspicion of old age, which at last we managed, after many trials and some quarrels, to a tolerable nicety. The picture was never finished, and I might have gone on with it to the present hour. I used to set it on the ground when my day's work was done, and saw revealed to me with swimming eyes the birth of new hopes, and of a new world of objects. The painter thus learns to look at nature with different eyes. He before saw her "as in a glass darkly, but now face to face." He understands the texture and meaning of the visible universe, and "sees into the life of things," not by the help of mechanical instruments, but of the improved exercise of his faculties, and an intimate sympathy with nature. The meanest thing is not lost upon him, for he looks at it with an eye to itself, not merely to his own vanity or interest, or the opinion of the world. Even where there is neither beauty nor use—if that ever were—still there is truth, and a sufficient source of gratification in the indulgence of curiosity and activity of mind. The humblest painter is a true scholar; and the best of scholars—the scholar of

nature. For myself, and for the real comfort and satisfaction of the thing, I had rather have been Jan Steen, or Gerard Dow, than the greatest casuist or philologer that ever lived. The painter does not view things in clouds or "mist, the common gloss of theologians," but applies the same standard of truth and disinterested spirit of inquiry, that influence his daily practice, to other subjects. He perceives form, he distinguishes character. He reads men and books with an intuitive eye. He is a critic as well as a connoisseur. The conclusions he draws are clear and convincing, because they are taken from the things themselves. He is not a fanatic, a dupe, or a slave; for the habit of seeing for himself also disposes him to judge for himself. The most sensible men I know (taken as a class) are painters; that is, they are the most lively observers of what passes in the world about them, and the closest observers of what passes in their own minds. From their profession they in general mix more with the world than authors; and if they have not the same fund of acquired knowledge, are obliged to rely more on individual sagacity. I might mention the names of Opie, Fuseli, Northcote, as persons distinguished for striking description and acquaintance with the subtle traits of character. Painters in ordinary society, or in obscure situations where their value is not known, and they are treated with neglect and indifference, have sometimes a forward self-sufficiency of manner; but this is not so much their fault as that of others. Perhaps their want of regular education may also be in fault in such cases. . . .

Besides the exercise of the mind, painting exercises the body. It is a mechanical as well as a liberal art. To do anything, to dig a hole in the ground, to plant a cabbage, to hit a mark, to move a shuttle, to work a pattern,—in a word, to attempt to produce any effect, and to *succeed*, has something in it that gratifies the love of power, and carries off the restless activity of the mind of man. Indolence is a delightful but distressing state; we must be doing something to be happy. Action is no less necessary than thought to the instinctive tendencies of the human frame; and painting combines them both incessantly. The hand furnishes a practical test of the correctness of the eye; and the eye, thus admonished, imposes fresh tasks of skill and industry upon the hand. Every stroke tells, as the verifying of a new truth; and every new observation, the instant it is made, passes into an act and emanation of the will. Every step is nearer what we wish, and yet there is always more to do. In spite of the facility, the fluttering grace, the evanescent hues, that play round the pencil of Rubens and Vandyke, however I may admire, I do not envy

them this power so much as I do the slow, patient, laborious execution of Correggio, Leonardo da Vinci, and Andrea del Sarto, where every touch appears conscious of its charge, emulous of truth, and where the painful artist has so distinctly wrought,

"That you might almost say his picture thought!"

In the one case, the colours seem breathed on the canvas as if by magic, the work and the wonder of a moment; in the other, they seem inlaid in the body of the work, and as if it took the artist years of unremitting labour, and of delightful never-ending progress to perfection. Who would wish ever to come to the close of such works,—not to dwell on them, to return to them, to be wedded to them to the last? Rubens, with his florid, rapid style, complained that when he had just learned his art, he should be forced to die. Leonardo, in the slow advances of his, had lived long enough!

Painting is not, like writing, what is properly understood by a sedentary employment. It requires not, indeed, a strong, but a continued and steady exertion of muscular power. The precision and delicacy of the manual operation makes up for the want of vehemence, — as to balance himself for any time in the same position the rope-dancer must strain every nerve. Painting for a whole morning gives one as excellent an appetite for one's dinner as old Abraham Tucker acquired for his by riding over Banstead Downs. It is related of Sir Joshua Reynolds, that "he took no other exercise than what he used in his painting-room,"—the writer means, in walking backwards and forwards to look at his picture; but the act of painting itself, of laying on the colours in the proper place and proper quantity, was a much harder exercise than this alternate receding from and returning to the picture. This last would be rather a relaxation and relief than an effort. It is not to be wondered at, that an artist like Sir Joshua, who delighted so much in the sensual and practical part of his art, should have found himself at a considerable loss when the decay of his sight precluded him, for the last year or two of his life, from the following up of his profession, — "the source," according to his own remark, "of thirty years' uninterrupted enjoyment and prosperity to him." It is only those who never think at all, or else who have accustomed themselves to brood incessantly on abstract ideas, that never feel *ennui*.

To give one instance more, and then I will have done with this rambling discourse. One of my first attempts was a picture of my father, who was then in a green old age, with strongly-marked

features, and scarred with the small-pox. I drew it out with a broad light crossing the face, looking down, with spectacles on, reading. The book was Shaftesbury's "Characteristics," in a fine old binding, with Gribelin's etchings. My father would as lieve it had been any other book; but for him to read was to be content, was "riches fineless." The sketch promised well; and I set to work to finish it, determined to spare no time nor pains. My father was willing to sit as long as I pleased; for there is a natural desire in the mind of man to sit for one's picture, to be the object of continued attention, to have one's likeness multiplied; and besides his satisfaction in the picture, he had some pride in the artist, though he would rather I should have written a sermon than painted like Rembrandt or like Raphael. Those winter days, with the gleams of sunshine coming through the chapel-windows, and cheered by the notes of the robin-redbreast in our garden (that "ever in the haunch of winter sings"),—as my afternoon's work drew to a close,—were among the happiest of my life. When I gave the effect I intended to any part of the picture for which I had prepared my colours; when I imitated the roughness of the skin by a lucky stroke of the pencil; when I hit the clear pearly tone of a vein; when I gave the ruddy complexion of health, the blood circulating under the broad shadows of one side of the face, I thought my fortune made; or rather it was already more than made, in my fancying that I might one day be able to say with Correggio, "*I also am a painter!*" It was an idle thought, a boy's conceit; but it did not make me less happy at the time. I used regularly to set my work in the chair to look at it through the long evenings; and many a time did I return to take leave of it before I could go to bed at night. I remember sending it with a throbbing heart to the Exhibition, and seeing it hung up there by the side of one of the Honourable Mr. Skeffington (now Sir George). There was nothing in common between them, but that they were the portraits of two very good-natured men. I think, but am not sure, that I finished this portrait (or another afterwards) on the same day that the news of the battle of Austerlitz came; I walked out in the afternoon, and as I returned, saw the evening star set over a poor man's cottage with other thoughts and feelings than I shall ever have again. Oh for the revolution of the great Platonic year, that those times might come over again! I could sleep out the three hundred and sixty-five thousand intervening years very contentedly!—The picture is left: the table, the chair, the window where I learned to construe Livy, the chapel where my father preached, remain where they were;

but he himself is gone to rest, full of years, of faith, of hope, and charity!

The painter not only takes a delight in nature, he has a new and exquisite source of pleasure opened to him in the study and contemplation of works of art—

> "Whate'er Lorraine light touch'd with soft'ning hue,
> Or savage Rosa dash'd, or learned Poussin drew."

He turns aside to view a country gentleman's seat with eager looks, thinking it may contain some of the rich products of art. There is an air round Lord Radnor's park, for there hang the two Claudes, the "Morning and Evening of the Roman Empire"—round Wilton House, for there is Vandyke's picture of the Pembroke family—round Blenheim, for there is his picture of the Duke of Buckingham's children, and the most magnificent collection of Rubenses in the world—at Knowsley, for there is Rembrandt's "Handwriting on the Wall"—and at Burleigh, for there are some of Guido's angelic heads. The young artist makes a pilgrimage to each of these places, eyes them wistfully at a distance, "bosomed high in tufted trees," and feels an interest in them of which the owner is scarce conscious: he enters the well-swept walks and echoing archways, passes the threshold, is led through wainscoted rooms, is shown the furniture, the rich hangings, the tapestry, the massy services of plate—and, at last, is ushered into the room where his treasure is, the idol of his vows—some speaking face or bright landscape! It is stamped on his brain, and lives there thenceforward, a tally for nature and a test of art. He furnishes out the chambers of the mind from the spoils of time, picks and chooses which shall have the best places—nearest his heart. He goes away richer than he came, richer than the possessor; and thinks that he may one day return, when he perhaps shall have done something like them, or even from failure shall have learned to admire truth and genius more.

My first initiation in the mysteries of the art was at the Orleans Gallery: it was there I formed my taste, such as it is; so that I am irreclaimably of the old school in painting. I was staggered when I saw the works there collected, and looked at them with wondering and with longing eyes. A mist passed away from my sight: the scales fell off. A new sense came upon me, a new heaven and a new earth stood before me. I saw the soul speaking in the face—"hands that the rod of empire had swayed" in mighty ages past—"a forked mountain or blue promontory,"

> ——" with trees upon't
> That nod unto the world, and mock our eyes with air,"

Old Time had unlocked his treasures, and Fame stood portress at the door. We had all heard of the names of Titian, Raphael, Guido, Domenichino, the Caracci—but to see them face to face, to be in the same room with their deathless productions, was like breaking some mighty spell—was almost an effect of necromancy! From that time I lived in a world of pictures. Battles, sieges, speeches in Parliament seemed mere idle noise and fury, "signifying nothing," compared with those mighty works and dreaded names that spoke to me in the eternal silence of thought. This was the more remarkable, as it was but a short time before that I was not only totally ignorant of, but insensible to, the beauties of art. As an instance, I remember that one afternoon I was reading "The Provoked Husband" with the highest relish, with a green woody landscape of Ruysdael or Hobbima just before me, at which I looked off the book now and then, and wondered what there could be in that sort of work to satisfy or delight the mind—at the same time asking myself, as a speculative question, whether I should ever feel an interest in it like what I took in reading Vanbrugh and Cibber?

I had made some progress in painting when I went to the Louvre to study, and I never did anything afterwards. I never shall forget conning over the Catalogue which a friend lent me just before I set out. The pictures, the names of the painters, seemed to relish in the mouth. There was one of Titian's mistress at her toilette. Even the colours with which the painter had adorned her hair were not more golden, more amiable to sight, than those which played round and tantalised my fancy ere I saw the picture. There were two portraits by the same hand—"A Young Nobleman with a Glove"—another, "a companion to it." I read the description over and over with fond expectancy, and filled up the imaginary outline with whatever I could conceive of grace, and dignity, and an antique *gusto*—all but equal to the original. There was the "Transfiguration" too. With what awe I saw it in my mind's eye, and was overshadowed with the spirit of the artist! Not to have been disappointed with these works afterwards, was the highest compliment I can pay to their transcendent merits. Indeed, it was from seeing other works of the same great masters that I had formed a vague, but no disparaging idea of these. The first day I got there, I was kept for some time in the French Exhibition room, and thought I should not be able to get a sight of the old masters. I just caught a peep at them through the door (vile hindrance!), like looking out of purgatory into paradise—from Poussin's noble mellow-looking landscapes to where Rubens hung out his gaudy banner, and down the glimmering vista to the rich jewels of Titian and the Italian school. At last,

by much importunity, I was admitted, and lost not an instant in making use of my new privilege. It was *un beau jour* to me. I marched delighted through a quarter of a mile of the proudest efforts of the mind of man, a whole creation of genius, a universe of art! I ran the gauntlet of all the schools from the bottom to the top; and in the end got admitted into the inner room, where they had been repairing some of their greatest works. Here the "Transfiguration," the "St. Peter Martyr," and the "St. Jerome" of Domenichino stood on the floor, as if they had bent their knees, like camels stooping, to unlade their riches to the spectator. On one side, on an easel, stood "Hippolito de Medici" (a portrait by Titian), with a boar-spear in his hand, looking through those he saw, till you turned away from the keen glance; and thrown together in heaps were landscapes of the same hand, green pastoral hills and vales, and shepherds piping to their mild mistresses underneath the flowering shade. Reader, "if thou hast not seen the Louvre, thou art damned!"—for thou hast not seen the choicest remains of the works of art; or thou hast not seen all these together, with their mutually reflected glories. I say nothing of the statues; for I know but little of sculpture, and never liked any till I saw the Elgin Marbles. . . . Here, for four months together, I strolled and studied, and daily heard the warning sound —"*Quatres heures passées, il faut fermer, Citoyens*"—(Ah! why did they ever change their style?)—muttered in coarse provincial French; and brought away with me some loose draughts and fragments, which I have been forced to part with, like drops of life-blood, for "hard money." How often, thou tenantless mansion of godlike magnificence—how often has my heart since gone a pilgrimage to thee! . . .

ON THE IDEAL.

[Reprinted from the *Atlas* newspaper.]

THE ideal is the abstraction of anything from all the circumstances that weaken its effect, or lessen our admiration of it; or it is filling up the outline of truth and beauty existing in the mind, so as to leave nothing wanting, or to desire further. The principle of the ideal is the satisfaction we have in the contemplation of any quality or object which makes us seek to heighten, to prolong, to extend that satisfaction to the utmost; and beyond this we cannot go; for we cannot get beyond the highest conceivable degree of any quality or excellence diffused over the whole of an object. Any notion of perfection beyond this is a word without meaning—a thing in the

clouds. Another name for the ideal is the divine, for what we imagine of the gods is pleasure without pain, power without effort. It is the most exalted idea we can form of humanity. . . .

The ideal, then, it appears by this account of it, is the enhancing and expanding an idea from the satisfaction we take in it, or it is taking away whatever divides, and adding whatever increases our sympathy with pleasure and power "till our content is absolute," or at the height. Hence that *repose* which has been remarked as one striking condition of the ideal; for, as it is nothing but the continued approximation of the mind to the great and the good, so in the attainment of this object it rejects as much as possible not only the petty, the mean, and disagreeable, but also the agony and violence of passion, the force of contrast, and the extravagance of imagination. It is a law to itself. It relies on its own aspirations after pure enjoyment and lofty contemplations alone, self-moved and self-sustained, without the grosser stimulus of the irritation of the will, privation, or suffering, unless when it is inured and reconciled to the last (as an element of its being) by heroic fortitude, and when "strong patience conquers deep despair." In this sense Milton's "Satan" is ideal, though tragic; for it is permanent tragedy, or one fixed idea without vicissitude or frailty, and where all the pride of intellect and power is brought to bear in confronting and enduring pain. Mr. Wordsworth has expressed this feeling of stoical indifference (proof against outward impressions) admirably in the poem of "Laodamia:"—

> "Know, virtue were not virtue, if the joys
> Of sense were able to return as fast
> And surely as they vanish. Earth destroys
> Those raptures truly; Erebus disdains—
> Calm pleasures there abide, majestic pains."

These lines are a noble description and example of the ideal in poetry. But the ideal is not in general the stronghold of poetry; for description inwards (to produce any vivid impression) requires a translation of the object into some other form, which is the language of metaphor and imagination, as narrative can only interest by a succession of events and a conflict of hopes and fears. Therefore, the sphere of the ideal is in a manner limited to sculpture and painting, where the object itself is given entire without any possible change of circumstances, and where, though the impression is momentary, it lasts for ever. . . .

The ideal, then, is the highest point of purity and perfection to which we can carry the idea of any object or quality. The natural

differs from the ideal style, inasmuch as what anything is differs from what we wish and can conceive it to be. Many people would substitute the phrase, from what it ought to be, to express the latter part of the alternative, and would explain what a thing ought to be by that which is best. But for myself, I do not understand, or at least it does not appear to me a self-evident proposition, either what a thing ought to be or what it is best that it should be; it is only shifting the difficulty a remove further, and begging the question a second time. I may know what is good; I can tell what is better; but that which is best is beyond me—it is a thing in the clouds. There is perhaps also a species of cant—the making up for a want of clearness of ideas by insinuating a pleasing moral inference—in the words purity and perfection used above; but I would be understood as meaning by purity nothing more than a freedom from alloy or any incongruous mixture in a given quality or character of an object, and by perfection completeness, or the extending that quality to all the parts and circumstances of an object, so that it shall be as nearly as possible of a piece. The imagination does not ordinarily bestow any pains on that which is mean and indifferent in itself, but having conceived an interest in anything, and the passions being once excited, we endeavour to give them food and scope by making that which is beautiful still more beautiful, that which is striking still more grand, that which is hateful still more deformed, through the positive, comparative, and superlative degrees, till the mind can go no farther in this progression of fancy and passion without losing the original idea, or quitting its hold of nature, which is the ground on which it still rests with fluttering pinions. The ideal does not transform any object into something else, or neutralise its character, but, by removing what is irrelevant and supplying what was defective, makes it more itself than it was before. . . .

ON JUDGING OF PICTURES.

[Reprinted from Hunt's *Literary Examiner*, 1823, No 5.]

PAINTERS assume that none can judge of pictures but themselves. Many do this avowedly, some by implication, and all in practice. They exclaim against any one writing about art who has not served his apprenticeship to the craft, who is not versed in the detail of its mechanism. This has often put me a little out of patience—but I will take patience, and say why.

In the first place, with regard to the productions of living artists,

painters have no right to speak at all. The way in which they are devoured and consumed by envy would be ludicrous if it were not lamentable. It is folly to talk of the divisions and backbitings of authors and poets while there are such people as painters in the world. I never in the whole course of my life heard one speak in hearty praise of another. Generally they blame downrightly; but at all events their utmost applause is with a damning reservation. Authors—even poets, the *genus irritabile*—do taste and acknowledge the beauties of the productions of their competitors; but painters either cannot see them through the green spectacles of envy, or seeing, they hate and deny them the more. In conformity with this, painters are more greedy of praise than any other order of men. "They gorge the little fame they get all raw"—they are gluttonous of it in their own persons in the proportion in which they would starve others. . . .

But to come to the more general subject. I deny *in toto* and at once the exclusive right and power of painters to judge of pictures. What is a picture made for? To convey certain ideas to the mind of a painter, that is, of one man in ten thousand? No, but to make them apparent to the eye and mind of all. If a picture be admired by none but painters, I think it is a strong presumption that the picture is bad. A painter is no more a judge, I suppose, than another man of how people feel and look under certain passions and events. Everybody sees as well as he whether certain figures on the canvas are like such a man, or like a cow, a tree, a bridge, or a windmill. All that the painter can do more than the *lay* spectator is to tell *why* and how the merits and defects of a picture are produced. I see that such a figure is ungraceful, and out of nature—he shows me that the drawing is faulty, or the foreshortening incorrect. He then points out to me whence the blemish arises; but he is not a bit more aware of the existence of the blemish than I am. In Hogarth's "Frontispiece" I see that the whole business is absurd, for a man on a hill two miles off could not light his pipe at a candle held out of a window close to me; he tells me that is from a want of perspective—that is, of certain rules by which certain effects are obtained. He shows me why the picture is bad, but I am just as well capable of saying "the picture is bad" as he is. To take a coarse illustration, but one most exactly apposite: I can tell whether a made dish be good or bad—whether its taste be pleasant or disagreeable; it is dressed for the palate of uninitiated people, and not alone for the disciples of Dr Kitchener and Mr Ude. But it needs a cook to tell one *why* it is bad; that there is a grain too much of this, or a drop too much of t'other; that it has been boiled

rather too much, or stewed rather too little. These things, the wherefores, as Squire Western would say, I require an artist to tell me; but the point in debate—the worth or the bad quality of the painting or pottage—I am as well able to decide upon as any who ever brandished a pallet or a pan, a brush or a skimming-ladle.

To go into the higher branches of the art—the poetry of painting—I deny still more peremptorily the exclusiveness of the initiated. It might as well be said that none but those who could write a play have any right to sit in the third row in the pit, on the first night of a new tragedy; nay, there is more plausibility in the one than the other. No man can judge of poetry without possessing in some measure a poetical mind; it need not be of that degree necessary to create, but it must be equal to taste and to analyse. Now, in painting there is a directly mechanical power required to render those imaginations, to the judging of which the mind may be perfectly competent. I may know what is a just or a beautiful representation of love, anger, madness, despair, without being able to draw a straight line; and I do not see how that faculty adds to the capability of so judging. A very great proportion of painting is mechanical. The higher kinds of painting need first a poet's mind to conceive; very well, but then they need a draughtsman's hand to execute. Now he who possesses the mind alone is fully able to judge of what is produced, even though he is by no means endowed with the mechanical power of producing it himself. I am far from saying that any one is capable of duly judging pictures of the higher class. It requires a mind capable of estimating the noble, or touching, or terrible, or sublime subjects which they present; but there is no sort of necessity that we should be able to put them upon the canvas ourselves. . . .

I am the farthest in the world from falling into the absurdity of upholding that painters should neglect the mechanical parts of their profession; for without a mastery in them it would be impossible to body forth any imaginations, however strong or beautiful. I only wish that they should not overlook the end to which these are the means—and give them an undue preference over that end itself. Still more I object to their arrogating to the possessors of these qualities of hand and eye all power of judging that which is conveyed through the physical vision into the inward soul.

On looking over what I have written, I find that I have used some expressions with regard to painters as a body which may make it appear that I hold them in light esteem, whereas no one can admire their art, or appreciate their pursuit of it, more highly than I do. Of what I have said, however, with regard to their paltry

denial of each other's merits, I cannot bate them an ace. I appeal to all those who are in the habit of associating with painters to say whether my assertion is not correct. And why should they do this? —surely the field is wide enough. Surely there are parallel roads which may be followed, each leading to the same point, but neither crossing nor trenching upon one another.

The art of Painting is one equally delightful to the eye and to the mind. It has very nearly the reality of dramatic exhibition, and has permanence, which that is wholly without. We may gaze at a picture, and pause to think, and turn and gaze again. The art is inferior to poetry in magnitude of extent and succession of detail, but its power over any one point is far superior; it seizes it, and figures it forth in corporeal existence, if not in bodily life. It gives to the eye the physical semblance of those figures which have floated in vagueness in the mind. It condenses indistinct and gauzy visions into palpable forms—as, in the story, the morning mist gathered into the embodying a spirit. But shall it be said that the enchanter alone can judge of the enchantment—that none shall have an eye to see, and a heart to feel, unless he have also a hand to execute? Alas! our inherent perceptions give the lie to this. As I used to go to the Louvre, day after day, to glut myself and revel in the congregated genius of pictorial ages, would any one convince me that it was necessary to be able to paint, that I might duly appreciate a picture?

EXPRESSION.

Expression is the great test and measure of a genius for painting and the fine arts. The mere imitation of *still-life*, however perfect, can never furnish proofs of the highest skill or talent; for there is an inner sense, a deeper intuition into nature that is never unfolded by merely mechanical objects, and which, if it were called out by a new soul being suddenly infused into an inanimate substance, would make the former unconscious representation appear crude and vapid. The eye is sharpened and the hand made more delicate in its tact,

> "While by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things."

We not only see but feel expression by the help of the finest of all our senses, the sense of pleasure and pain. He, then, is the greatest painter who can put the greatest quantity of expression into his works, for this is the nicest and most subtle object of imitation; it is that in which any defect is soonest visible, which

must be able to stand the severest scrutiny, and where the power of avoiding errors, extravagance, or tameness can only be supplied by the fund of moral feeling, the strength or delicacy of the artist's sympathy with the ideal object of his imagination. To see or imitate any given sensible object is one thing, the effect of attention and practice; but to give expression to a face is to collect its meaning from a thousand other sources, is to bring into play the observation and feeling of one's whole life, or an infinity of knowledge bearing upon a single object in different degrees and manners, and implying a loftiness and refinement of character proportioned to the loftiness and refinement of expression delineated. Expression is of all things the least to be mistaken, and the most evanescent in its manifestation. Pope's lines on the character of women may be addressed to the painter who undertakes to embody it:—

> "Come then, the colours and the ground prepare,
> Dip in the rainbow, trick it off in air;
> Choose a firm cloud, before it falls, and in it
> Catch, ere it change, the Cynthia of the minute."

—"On a Picture by Vandyck."

[The four following extracts are from *Sketches of the Principal Picture Galleries in England*, 1824, which is reprinted in the volume of collected *Essays on the Fine Arts*.]

THE DULWICH GALLERY.

It was on the 5th of November that we went to see this Gallery. The morning was mild, calm, pleasant: it was a day to ruminate on the object we had in view. It was the time of year

> "When yellow leaves, or few, or none do hang
> Upon the branches;"

their scattered gold was strongly contrasted with the dark green spiral shoots of the cedar-trees that skirt the road; the sun shone faint and watery, as if smiling his last; Winter gently let go the hand of Summer, and the green fields, wet with the mist, anticipated the return of Spring. At the end of a beautiful little village, Dulwich College appeared in view, with modest state, yet mindful of the olden time; and the name of Allen and his compeers rushed full upon the memory! How many races of schoolboys have played within its walls, or stammered out a lesson, or sauntered away their vacant hours in its shade: yet, not one Shakspeare is there to be found among them all! The boy is clothed and fed, and gets through

his accidence; but no trace of his youthful learning, any more than of his saffron livery, is to be met with in the man. Genius is not to be "constrained by mastery." Nothing comes of these endowments and foundations for learning; you might as well make dirt-pies, or build houses with cards. Yet something *does* come of them too—a retreat for age, a dream in youth—a feeling in the air around them, the memory of the past, the hope of what will never be. Sweet are the studies of the schoolboy, delicious his idle hours! Fresh and gladsome is his waking, balmy are his slumbers, book-pillowed! He wears a green and yellow livery, perhaps; but "green and yellow melancholy" comes not near him, or, if it does, is tempered with youth and innocence! To thumb his Eutropius, or to knuckle down at taw, are to him equally delightful; for whatever stirs the blood, or inspires thought in him, quickens the pulse of life and joy. He has only to feel, in order to be happy; pain turns smiling from him, and sorrow is only a softer kind of pleasure. Each sensation is but an unfolding of his new being; care, age, sickness, are idle words; the musty records of antiquity look glossy in his sparkling eye, and he clasps immortality as his future bride! The coming years hurt him not—he hears their sound afar off, and is glad. See him there, the urchin seated in the sun, with a book in his hand, and the wall at his back. He has a thicker wall before him—the wall that parts him from the future. He sees not the archers taking aim at his peace; he knows not the hands that are to mangle his bosom. He stirs not, he still pores upon his book, and as he reads, a slight hectic flush passes over his cheek, for he sees the letters that compose the word FAME glitter on the page, and his eyes swim, and he thinks that he will one day write a book, and have his name repeated by thousands of readers, and assume a certain signature, and write Essays and Criticisms in a LONDON MAGAZINE, as a consummation of felicity scarcely to be believed. Come hither, thou poor little fellow, and let us change places with thee, if thou wilt; here take the pen, and finish this article, and sign what name you please to it; so that we may but change our dress for yours, and sit shivering in the sun, and con over our little task, and feed poor, and lie hard, and be contented and happy, and think what a fine thing it is to be an author, and dream of immortality, and sleep o' nights! . . .—"The Dulwich Gallery."

INTERCOURSE WITH PICTURES AND BOOKS.

OUR intercourse with the dead is better than our intercourse with the living. There are only three pleasures in life pure and lasting,

and all derived from inanimate things—books, pictures, and the face of nature. What is the world but a heap of ruined friendships, but the grave of love? All other pleasures are as false and hollow, vanishing from our embrace like smoke, or like a feverish dream. Scarcely can we recollect that they were, or recall without an effort the anxious and momentary interest we took in them.

But thou, oh! divine "Bath of Diana," with deep azure dyes, with roseate hues, spread by the hand of Titian, art still there upon the wall, another, yet the same that thou wert five-and-twenty years ago, nor wantest

> "Forked mountain or blue promotory,
> With trees upon 't that nod unto the world,
> And mock our eyes with air!"

And lo! over the clear lone brow of Tuderley and Norman Court, knit into the web and fibres of our heart, the sighing grove waves in the autumnal air, deserted by Love, by Hope, but for ever haunted by Memory! And there that fine passage stands in "Antony and Cleopatra" as we read it long ago with exulting eyes in Paris, after puzzling over a tragedy of Racine's, and cried aloud, "Our Shakspeare was also a poet!" These feelings are dear to us at the time; and they come back unimpaired, heightened, mellowed, whenever we choose to go back to them. We turn over the leaf and "volume of the brain," and there see them face to face.—Marina in "Pericles" complains that

> "Life is as a storm hurrying her from her friends!"

Not so from the friends above mentioned. If we bring but an eye, an understanding, and a heart to them, we find them always with us, always the same. The change, if there is one, is in us, not in them. Oh! thou then, whoever thou art, that dost seek happiness in thyself, independent of others, not subject to caprice, not mocked by insult, not snatched away by ruthless hands, over which Time has no power, and that Death alone cancels, seek it (if thou art wise) in books, in pictures, and the face of nature, for these alone we may count upon as friends for life! While we are true to ourselves, they will not be faithless to us. While we remember anything, we cannot forget them. As long as we have a wish for pleasure, we may find it here; for it depends only on our love for them, and not on theirs for us. The enjoyment is purely *ideal*, and is refined, unembittered, unfading, for that reason.—"The Marquis of Stafford's Gallery."

APOSTROPHE TO BURLEIGH HOUSE.

BURLEIGH! thy groves are leafless, thy walls are naked,

"And dull, cold winter does inhabit here."

The yellow evening rays gleam through thy fretted Gothic windows; but I only feel the rustling of withered branches strike chill to my breast; it was not so twenty years ago. Thy groves were leafless then as now: it was the middle of winter twice that I visited thee before; but the lark mounted in the sky, and the sun smote my youthful blood with its slant ray, and the ploughman whistled as he drove his team afield; hope spread out its glad vista through thy fair domains, O Burleigh! Fancy decked thy walls with works of sovereign art, and it was spring, not winter, in my breast. All is still the same, like a petrifaction of the mind—the same thing in the same places; but their effect is not the same upon me. I am twenty years the worse for *wear and tear*. What is become of the never-ending studious thoughts that brought their own reward or promised good to mankind? of the tears that started welcome and unbidden? of the sighs that whispered future peace? of the smiles that shone, not in my face indeed, but that cheered my heart, and made a sunshine there when all was gloom around? That fairy vision—that invisible glory, by which I was once attended—ushered into life, has left my side, and "faded to the light of common day," and I now see what is, or has been—not what may lie hid in time's bright circle and golden chaplet! Perhaps this is the characteristic difference between youth and a later period of life—that we, by degrees, learn to take things more as we find them, call them more by their right names; that we feel the warmth of summer, but the winter's cold as well; that we see beauties, but can spy defects in the fairest face; and no longer look at everything through the genial atmosphere of our own existence. We grow more literal and less credulous every day, lose much enjoyment, and gain some useful, and more useless, knowledge. The second time I passed along the road that skirts Burleigh Park, the morning was dank and "ways were mire." I saw and felt it not: my mind was otherwise engaged. Ah! thought I, there is that fine old head by Rembrandt; there, within those cold grey walls, the painter of old age is enshrined, immortalised in some of his inimitable works! The name of Rembrandt lives in the fame of him who stamped it with renown, while the name of Burleigh is kept up by the present owner. An artist survives in the issue of his brain to all posterity—a lord is

nothing without the issue of his body lawfully begotten, and is lost in a long line of illustrious ancestors. So much higher is genius than rank—such is the difference between fame and title! A great name in art lasts for centuries—it requires twenty generations of a noble house to keep alive the memory of the first founder for the same length of time. So I reasoned, and was not a little proud of my discovery.

In this dreaming mood, dreaming of deathless works and deathless names, I went on to Peterborough, passing, as it were, under an archway of fame,

> "And, still walking under,
> Found some new matter to look up and wonder."

I had business there: I will not say what. I could at this time do nothing. I could not write a line—I could not draw a stroke. "I was brutish;" though not "warlike as the wolf, nor subtle as the fox for prey." In words, in looks, in deeds, I was no better than a changeling. Why, then, do I set so much value on my existence formerly? O God! that I could but be for one day, one hour, but for an instant (to feel it in all the plenitude of unconscious bliss, and take one long, last, lingering draught of that full brimming cup of thoughtless freedom), what then I was;—that I might, as in a trance, a waking dream, hear the hoarse murmur of the bargemen, as the Minster tower appeared in the dim twilight, come up from the willowy stream, sounding low and underground like the voice of the bittern;—that I might paint that field opposite the window where I lived, and feel that there was a green, dewy moisture in the tone, beyond my pencil's reach, but thus gaining almost a new sense, and watching the birth of new objects without me;—that I might stroll down Peterborough bank (a winter's day), and see the fresh marshes stretching out in endless level perspective (as if Paul Potter had painted them), with the cattle, the windmills, and the red-tiled cottages gleaming in the sun to the very verge of the horizon; and watch the fieldfares in innumerable flocks, gambolling in the air, and sporting in the sun, and racing before the clouds, making summersaults, and dazzling the eye by throwing themselves into a thousand figures and movements;—that I might go, as then, a pilgrimage to the town where my mother was born, and visit the poor farm-house where she was brought up, and lean upon the gate where she told me she used to stand when a child of ten years old and look at the setting sun!—I could do all this still, but with different feelings. As our hopes leave us, we lose even our interest and regrets for the past. I had at this time, simple as I seemed,

many resources. I could in some sort "play at bowls with the sun and moon;" or, at any rate there was no question in metaphysics that I could not bandy to and fro, as one might play at cup-and-ball, for twenty, thirty, forty miles of the great North Road, and at it again the next day as fresh as ever. I soon get tired of this now, and wonder how I managed formerly. I knew "Tom Jones" by heart, and was deep in "Peregrine Pickle." I was intimately acquainted with all the heroes and heroines of Richardson's romances, and could turn from one to the other as I pleased. I could con over that single passage in "Pamela" about "her lumpish heart," and never have done admiring the skill of the author and the truth of nature. I had my sports and recreations too, some such as these following:—

"To see the sun to bed, and to arise,
Like some hot amourist, with glowing eyes
Bursting the lazy bands of sleep that bound him,
With all his fires and travelling glories round him.
Sometimes the moon on soft night clouds to rest,
Like beauty nestling in a young man's breast,
And all the winking stars, her handmaids, keep
Admiring silence while those lovers sleep.
Sometimes outstretched, in very idleness,
Nought doing, saying little, thinking less,
To view the leaves, thin dancers upon air,
Go eddying round, and small birds how they fare,
When mother Autumn fills their beaks with corn,
Filched from the careless Amalthea's horn:
And how the woods berries and worms provide
Without their pains, when earth has nought beside
To answer their small wants.
To view the graceful deer come tripping by,
Then stop and gaze, then turn they know not why,
Like bashful younkers in society.
To mark the structure of a plant or tree,
And all fair things of earth, how fair they be." *

—Pictures at Burleigh House.

OXFORD.

Rome has been called the "Sacred City:" might not *our* Oxford be called so too? There is an air about it resonant of joy and hope: it speaks with a thousand tongues to the heart: it waves its mighty shadow over the imagination: it stands in lowly sublimity on the

* From Charles Lamb's "John Woodvil," a Tragedy, 1802.

"hill of ages," and points with prophetic fingers to the sky: it greets the eager gaze from afar "with glistening spires and pinnacles adorned," that shine with an eternal light as with the lustre of setting suns; and a dream and a glory hover round its head, as the spirits of former times, a throng of intellectual shapes, are seen retreating or advancing to the eye of memory: its streets are paved with the names of learning that can never wear out: its green quadrangles breathe the silence of thought, conscious of the weight of yearnings innumerable after the past, of loftiest aspirations for the future: Isis babbles of the Muse, its waters are from the springs of Helicon, its Christ Church meadows, classic, Elysian fields! we could pass our lives in Oxford without having or wanting any other idea—that of the place is enough. We imbibe the air of thought; we stand in the presence of learning. We are admitted into the Temple of Fame, we feel that we are in the sanctuary, on holy ground, and "hold high converse with the mighty dead." The enlightened and the ignorant are on a level, if they have but faith in the tutelary genius of the place. We may be wise by proxy, and studious by prescription. Time has taken upon himself the labour of thinking; and accumulated libraries leave us leisure to be dull. There is no occasion to examine the buildings, the churches, the colleges, by the rules of architecture, to reckon up the streets, to compare it with Cambridge (Cambridge lies out of the way, on one side of the world); but woe to him who does not feel in passing through Oxford that he is in "no mean city," that he is surrounded with the monuments and lordly mansions of the mind of man, outvying in pomp and splendour the courts and palaces of princes, rising like an exhalation in the night of ignorance, and triumphing over barbaric foes, saying, "All eyes shall see me, and all knees shall bow to me!"—as the shrine where successive ages came to pay their pious vows, and slake the sacred thirst of knowledge; where youthful hopes (an endless flight) soared to truth and good; and where the retired and lonely student brooded over the historic or over fancy's page, imposing high tasks for himself, framing high destinies fo the race of man—the lamp, the mine. the well-head whence the spark of learning was kindled, its stream flowed, its treasures were spread out through the remotest corners of the land and to distant nations. Let him, then, who is fond of indulging in a dream-like existence, go to Oxford, and stay there; let him study this magnificent spectacle, the same under all aspects, with its mental twilight tempering the glare of noon, or mellowing the silver moonlight; let him wander in her sylvan suburbs, or linger in her cloistered halls; but let him not catch the din of scholars or teachers, or dine or sup

with them, or speak a word to any of the privileged inhabitants; for if he does, the spell will be broken, the poetry and the religion gone, and the palace of the enchantment will melt from his embrace into thin air!—"Pictures at Oxford and Blenheim."

[From *The Spirit of the Age, or Contemporary Portraits*, 1825. Some of the portraits had previously appeared in the *New Monthly Magazine*. Second Edition, 1825. Third Edition, 1858. Fourth Edition, 1886.]

COLERIDGE.

. . . Mr. Coleridge has "a mind reflecting ages past:" his voice is like the echo of the congregated roar of the "dark rearward and abyss" of thought. He who has seen a mouldering tower by the side of a crystal lake, hid by the mist, but glittering in the wave below, may conceive the dim, gleaming, uncertain intelligence of his eye: he who has marked the evening clouds uprolled (a world of vapours) has seen the picture of his mind, unearthly, unsubstantial, with gorgeous tints and ever-varing forms—

> "That which was now a horse, even with a thought
> The rack dislimns, and makes it indistinct
> As water is in water."

Our author's mind is (as he himself might express it) *tangential*. There is no subject on which he has not touched, none on which he has rested. With an understanding fertile, subtle, expansive, "quick, forgetive, apprehensive," beyond all living precedent, few traces of it will perhaps remain. He lends himself to all impressions alike; he gives up his mind and liberty of thought to none. He is a general lover of art and science, and wedded to no one in particular. He pursues knowledge as a mistress, with outstretched hands and winged speed; but as he is about to embrace her, his Daphne turns—alas! not to a laurel! Hardly a speculation has been left on record from the earliest time, but it is loosely folded up in Mr. Coleridge's memory, like a rich, but somewhat tattered piece of tapestry: we might add (with more seeming than real extravagance), that scarce a thought can pass through the mind of man, but its sound has at some time or other passed over his head with rustling pinions.

On whatever question or author you speak, he is prepared to take

up the theme with advantage—from Peter Abelard down to Thomas Moore, from the subtlest metaphysics to the politics of the *Courier*. There is no man of genius, in whose praise he descants, but the critic seems to stand above the author, and "what in him is weak, to strengthen, what is low, to raise and support:" nor is there any work of genius that does not come out of his hands like an illuminated Missal, sparkling even in its defects. If Mr. Coleridge had not been the most impressive talker of his age, he would probably have been the finest writer; but he lays down his pen to make sure of an auditor, and mortgages the admiration of posterity for the stare of an idler. If he had not been a poet, he would have been a powerful logician; if he had not dipped his wing in the Unitarian controversy, he might have soared to the very summit of fancy. But, in writing verse, he is trying to subject the Muse to *transcendental* theories: in his abstract reasoning, he misses his way by strewing it with flowers.

All that he has done of moment, he had done twenty years ago: since then, he may be said to have lived on the sound of his own voice. Mr. Coleridge is too rich in intellectual wealth to need to task himself to any drudgery: he has only to draw the sliders of his imagination, and a thousand subjects expand before him, startling him with their brilliancy, or losing themselves in endless obscurity—

> "And by the force of blear illusion,
> They draw him on to his confusion."

What is the little he could add to the stock, compared with the countless stores that lie about him, that he should stoop to pick up a name or to polish an idle fancy? He walks abroad in the majesty of an universal understanding, eyeing the "rich strond" or golden sky above him, and "goes sounding on his way," in eloquent accents, uncompelled and free! . . .

Learning rocked him in his cradle, and while yet a child,

> "He lisped in numbers, for the numbers came."

At sixteen he wrote his "Ode on Chatterton," and he still reverts to that period with delight, not so much as it relates to himself (for that string of his own early promise of fame rather jars than otherwise), but as exemplifying the youth of a poet. Mr. Coleridge talks of himself without being an egotist; for in him the individual is always merged in the abstract and general. He distinguished himself at school and at the University by his knowledge of the classics, and gained several prizes for Greek epigrams. How many men are there (great scholars, celebrated names in literature) who, having

done the same thing in their youth, have no other idea all the rest of their lives but of this achievement, of a fellowship and dinner, and who, installed in academic honours, would look down on our author as a mere strolling bard! At Christ's Hospital, where he was brought up, he was the idol of those among his schoolfellows who mingled with their bookish studies the music of thought and of humanity; and he was usually attended round the cloisters by a group of these (inspiring and inspired), whose hearts even then burnt within them as he talked, and where the sounds yet linger to mock ELIA on his way, still turning pensive to the past!

One of the finest and rarest parts of Mr. Coleridge's conversation is when he expatiates on the Greek tragedians (not that he is not well acquainted, when he pleases, with the epic poets, or the philosophers, or orators, or historians of antiquity)—on the subtle reasonings and melting pathos of Euripides, on the harmonious gracefulness of Sophocles, tuning his love-laboured song, like sweetest warblings from a sacred grove; on the high-wrought, trumpet-tongued eloquence of Æschylus, whose "Prometheus," above all, is like an Ode to Fate and a pleading with Providence, his thoughts being let loose as his body is chained on his solitary rock, and his afflicted will (the emblem of mortality)

"Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny."

As the impassioned critic speaks and rises in his theme, you would think you heard the voice of the Man hated by the Gods, contending with the wild winds as they roar; and his eye glitters with the spirit of Antiquity!

Next, he was engaged with Hartley's tribes of mind, "ethereal braid, thought-woven,"—and he busied himself for a year or two with vibrations and vibratiuncles, and the great law of association that binds all things in its mystic chain, and the doctrine of Necessity (the mild teacher of Charity), and the Millennium, anticipative of a life to come; and he plunged deep into the controversy on Matter and Spirit, and, as an escape from Dr. Priestley's "Materialism," where he felt himself imprisoned by the logician's spell, like Ariel in the cloven pine-tree, he became suddenly enamoured of Bishop Berkeley's fairy-world, and used in all companies to build the universe, like a brave poetical fiction, of fine words. And he was deep-read in Malebranche, and in Cudworth's "Intellectual System" (a huge pile of learning, unwieldy, enormous), and in Lord Brook's hieroglyphic theories, and in Bishop Butler's Sermons, and in the Duchess of Newcastle's fantastic folios, and in Clarke and South, and Tillotson, and all the fine thinkers and masculine reasoners of that age; and

Leibnitz's "Pre-established Harmony" reared its arch above his head, like the rainbow in the cloud, covenanting with the hopes of man.

And then he fell plumb, ten thousand fathoms down (but his wings saved him harmless), into the *hortus siccus* of Dissent, where he pared religion down to the standard of reason, and stripped faith of mystery, and preached Christ crucified and the Unity of the Godhead, and so dwelt for a while in the spirit with John Huss and Jerome of Prague and Socinus and old John Zisca, and ran through Neal's "History of the Puritans" and Calamy's "Non-Conformists' Memorial," having like thoughts and passions with them. But then Spinoza became his God, and he took up the vast chain of being in his hand, and the round world became the centre and the soul of all things in some shadowy sense, forlorn of meaning, and around him he beheld the living traces and the sky-pointing proportions of the mighty Pan; but poetry redeemed him from this spectral philosophy, and he bathed his heart in beauty, and gazed at the golden light of heaven, and drank of the spirit of the universe, and wandered at eve by fairy-stream or fountain,

> ——"When he saw nought but beauty,
> When he heard the voice of that Almighty One
> In every breeze that blew, or wave that murmured"—

and wedded with truth in Plato's shade, and in the writings of Proclus and Plotinus saw the ideas of things in the eternal mind, and unfolded all mysteries with the Schoolmen and fathomed the depths of Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas, and entered the third heaven with Jacob Behmen, and walked hand-in-hand with Swedenborg through the pavilions of the New Jerusalem, and sang his faith in the promise and in the word in his "Religious Musings."

And lowering himself from that dizzy height, [he] poised himself on Milton's wings, and spread out his thoughts in charity with the glad prose of Jeremy Taylor, and wept over Bowles's "Sonnets," and studied Cowper's blank verse, and betook himself to Thomson's "Castle of Indolence," and sported with the wits of Charles the Second's days and of Queen Anne, and relished Swift's style and that of the "John Bull" (Arbuthnot's we mean, not Mr. Croker's), and dallied with the "British Essayists and Novelists," and knew all qualities of more modern writers with a learned spirit: Johnson, and Goldsmith, and Junius, and Burke, and Godwin, and the "Sorrows of Werter," and Jean Jacques Rousseau, and Voltaire, and Marivaux, and Crebillon, and thousands more: now "laughed with Rabelais in his easy-chair" or pointed to Hogarth, or afterwards

dwelt on Claude's classic scenes, or spoke with rapture of Raphael, and compared the women at Rome to figures that had walked out of his pictures, or visited the Oratory of Pisa, and described the works of Giotto and Ghirlandaio and Massaccio, and gave the moral of the picture of the "Triumph of Death," where the beggars and the wretched invoke his dreadful dart, but the rich and mighty of the earth quail and shrink before it; and in that land of siren sights and sounds, saw a dance of peasant girls, and was charmed with lutes and gondolas,—or wandered into Germany and lost himself in the labyrinths of the Hartz Forest and of the Kantean philosophy, and amongst the cabalistic names of Fichtè and Schelling and Lessing, and God knows who. This was long after; but all the former while he had nerved his heart and filled his eyes with tears, as he hailed the rising orb of liberty, since quenched in darkness and in blood, and had kindled his affections at the blaze of the French Revolution, and sang for joy, when the towers of the Bastille and the proud places of the insolent and the oppressor fell, and would have floated his bark, freighted with fondest fancies, across the Atlantic wave with Southey and others to seek for peace and freedom—

"In Philarmonia's undivided dale!"

Alas! "Frailty, thy name is *Genius!*"—What is become of all this mighty heap of hope, of thought, of learning and humanity? It has ended in swallowing doses of oblivion and in writing paragraphs in the *Courier*. Such and so little is the mind of man! . . .

Of all Mr. Coleridge's productions, the "Ancient Mariner" is the only one that we could with confidence put into any person's hands on whom we wished to impress a favourable idea of his extraordinary powers. Let whatever other objections be made to it, it is unquestionably a work of genius—of wild, irregular, overwhelming imagination, and has that rich, varied movement in the verse, which gives a distant idea of the lofty or changeful tones of Mr. Coleridge's voice. In the "Christobel" there is one splendid passage on divided friendship. The Translation of Schiller's "Wallenstein" is also a masterly production in its kind, faithful and spirited. Among his smaller pieces there are occasional bursts of pathos and fancy, equal to what we might expect from him; but these form the exception, and not the rule. Such, for instance, is his affecting Sonnet to the author of the "Robbers."

His Tragedy, entitled "Remorse," is full of beautiful and striking passages; but it does not place the author in the first rank of dramatic writers. But if Mr. Coleridge's works do not place

him in that rank, they injure instead of conveying a just idea of the man; for he himself is certainly in the first class of general intellect.

If our author's poetry is inferior to his conversation, his prose is utterly abortive. Hardly a gleam is to be found in it of the brilliancy and richness of those stores of thought and language that he pours out incessantly, when they are lost like drops of water in the ground. The principal work, in which he has attempted to embody his general view of things, is the FRIEND, of which, though it contains some noble passages and fine trains of thought, prolixity and obscurity are the most frequent characteristics.

No two persons can be conceived more opposite in character or genius than Mr. Coleridge and Mr. Godwin. The latter, with less natural capacity, and with fewer acquired advantages, by concentrating his mind on some given object, and doing what he had to do with all his might, has accomplished much, and will leave more than one monument of a powerful intellect behind him; Mr. Coleridge, by dissipating his, and dallying with every subject by turns, has done little or nothing to justify to the world or to posterity the high opinion which all who have ever heard him converse, or known him intimately, with one accord entertain of him. Mr. Godwin's faculties have kept house, and plied their task in the workshop of the brain, diligently and effectually: Mr. Coleridge's have gossiped away their time, and gadded about from house to house, as if life's business were to melt the hours in listless talk. Mr. Godwin is intent on a subject, only as it concerns himself and his reputation; he works it out as a matter of duty, and discards from his mind whatever does not forward his main object as impertinent and vain. Mr. Coleridge, on the other hand, delights in nothing but episodes and digressions, neglects whatever he undertakes to perform, and can act only on spontaneous impulses, without object or method. "He cannot be constrained by mastery." While he should be occupied with a given pursuit, he is thinking of a thousand other things; a thousand tastes, a thousand objects tempt him, and distract his mind, which keeps open house, and entertains all comers; and after being fatigued and amused with morning calls from idle visitors, finds the day consumed and its business unconcluded. Mr. Godwin, on the contrary, is somewhat exclusive and unsocial in his habits of mind, entertains no company but what he gives his whole time and attention to, and wisely writes over the doors of his understanding, his fancy, and his senses—"No admittance except on business." He has none of that fastidious refinement and false delicacy, which might lead him to balance between

the endless variety of modern attainments. He does not throw away his life (nor a single half-hour of it) in adjusting the claims of different accomplishments, and in choosing between them or making himself master of them all. He sets about his task (whatever it may be), and goes through it with spirit and fortitude. He has the happiness to think an author the greatest character in the world, and himself the greatest author in it. Mr. Coleridge, in writing an harmonious stanza, would stop to consider whether there was not more grace and beauty in a *Pas de trois*, and would not proceed till he had resolved this question by a chain of metaphysical reasoning without end. Not so Mr. Godwin. That is best to him which he can do best. He does not waste himself in vain aspirations and effeminate sympathies. He is blind, deaf, insensible to all but the trump of Fame. Plays, operas, painting, music, ball-rooms, wealth, fashion, titles, lords, ladies, touch him not—all these are no more to him than to the anchorite in his cell, and he writes on to the end of the chapter, through good report and evil report. *Pingo in eternitatem* is his motto. He neither envies nor admires what others are, but is contented to be what he is, and strives to do the utmost he can. Mr. Coleridge has flirted with the Muses as with a set of mistresses: Mr. Godwin has been married twice, to Reason and to Fancy, and has to boast no short-lived progeny by each. So to speak, he has *valves* belonging to his mind, to regulate the quantity of gas admitted into it, so that, like the bare, unsightly, but well-compacted steam-vessel, it cuts its liquid way, and arrives at its promised end: while Mr. Coleridge's bark, "taught with the little nautilus to sail," the sport of every breath, dancing to every wave,

"Youth at its prow, and Pleasure at its helm,"

flutters its gaudy pennons in the air, glitters in the sun, but we wait in vain to hear of its arrival in the destined harbour. Mr. Godwin, with less variety and vividness, with less subtlety and susceptibility both of thought and feeling, has had firmer nerves, a more determined purpose, a more comprehensive grasp of his subject, and the results are as we find them. Each has met with his reward: for justice has, after all, been done to the pretensions of each; and we must, in all cases, use means to ends!

[The eccentricities of Coleridge's marvellous genius are admirably set forth by Hazlitt in a review of his "Lay Sermon" (*Political Essays*, page 118). This brilliant performance would have been given in these Selections, but, as it occupies six pages, the requisite space for it could not be afforded. The student of Hazlitt should not miss it.]

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

Sir Walter Scott is undoubtedly the most popular writer of the age, the "lord of the ascendant" for the time being. He is just half what the human intellect is capable of being: if you take the universe, and divide it into two parts, he knows all that it *has been*; all that it *is to be* is nothing to him. His is a mind brooding over antiquity—scorning "the present ignorant time." He is "laudator temporis acti"—a "*prophesier* of things past." The old world is to him a crowded map; the new one a dull, hateful blank. He dotes on all well-authenticated superstitions; he shudders at the shadow of innovation. His retentiveness of memory, his accumulated weight of interested prejudice or romantic association, have overlaid his other faculties. The cells of his memory are vast, various, full even to bursting with life and motion; his speculative understanding is empty, flaccid, poor, and dead. His mind receives and treasures up everything brought to it by tradition or custom—it does not project itself beyond this into the world unknown, but mechanically shrinks back as from the edge of a precipice. The land of pure reason is to his apprehension like Van Diemen's Land—barren, miserable, distant, a place of exile, the dreary abode of savages, convicts, and adventurers. Sir Walter would make a bad hand of a description of the Millennium, unless he could lay the scene in Scotland five hundred years ago, and then he would want facts and worm-eaten parchments to support his drooping style. Our historical novelist firmly thinks that nothing *is* but what *has been*, that the moral world stands still, as the material one was supposed to do of old, and that we can never get beyond the point where we actually are without utter destruction, though everything changes and will change from what it was three hundred years ago to what it is now, —from what it is now to all that the bigoted admirer of the good old times most dreads and hates.

It is long since we read, and long since we thought of, our author's poetry. It would probably have gone out of date with the immediate occasion, even if he himself had not contrived to banish it from our recollection. It is not to be denied that it had great merit, both of an obvious and intrinsic kind. It abounded in vivid descriptions, in spirited action, in smooth and flowing versification. But it wanted *character*. It was "poetry of no mark or likelihood." It slid out of the mind as soon as read, like a river; and would have been forgotten, but that the public curiosity was fed with ever-new supplies from the same teeming liquid source. It is not every man

that can write six quarto volumes in verse, that are caught up with avidity, even by fastidious judges. But what a difference between *their* popularity and that of the Scotch Novels! It is true, the public read and admired the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," "Marmion," and so on, and each individual was contented to read and admire because the public did so: but with regard to the prose-works of the same (supposed) author, it is quite *another-guess* sort of thing. Here every one stands forward to applaud on his own ground, would be thought to go before the public opinion; is eager to extol his favourite characters louder, to understand them better, than everybody else, and has his own scale of comparative excellence for each work, supported by nothing but his own enthusiastic and fearless convictions.

It must be amusing to the Author of "Waverley" to hear his readers and admirers (and are not these the same thing?) quarrelling which of his novels is the best, opposing character to character, quoting passage against passage, striving to surpass each other in the extravagance of their encomiums, and yet unable to settle the precedence, or to do the author's writings justice—so various, so equal, so transcendent are their merits! His volumes of poetry were received as fashionable and well-dressed acquaintances: we are ready to tear the others in pieces as old friends. There was something meretricious in Sir Walter's ballad-rhymes; and like those who keep opera *figurantes*, we were willing to have our admiration shared and our taste confirmed by the town. But the Novels are like the betrothed of our hearts, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and we are jealous that any one should be as much delighted or as thoroughly acquainted with their beauties as ourselves. For which of his poetical heroines would the reader break a lance so soon as for Jeanie Deans? What Lady of the Lake can compare with the beautiful Rebecca? We believe the late Mr. John Scott went to his death-bed (though a painful and premature one) with some degree of satisfaction, inasmuch as he had penned the most elaborate panegyric on the Scotch Novels that had as yet appeared!

The Epics are not poems, so much as metrical romances. There is a glittering veil of verse thrown over the features of nature and of old romance. The deep incisions into character are "skinned and filmed over;" the details are lost or shaped into flimsy and insipid decorum; and the truth of feeling and of circumstance is translated into a tinkling sound, a tinsel *commonplace*. It must be owned, there is a power in true poetry that lifts the mind from the ground of reality to a higher sphere, that penetrates the inert,

scattered, incoherent materials presented to it, and by a force and inspiration of its own, melts and moulds them into sublimity and beauty. But Sir Walter (we contend, under correction) has not this creative impulse, this plastic power, this capacity of reacting on his first impressions. He is a learned, a literal, a *matter-of-fact* expounder of truth or fable: he does not soar above and look down upon his subject, imparting his own lofty views and feelings to his descriptions of nature—he relies upon it, is raised by it, is one with it, or he is nothing. A poet is essentially a *maker;* that is, he must atone for what he loses in individuality and local resemblance by the energies and resources of his own mind.

The writer of whom we speak is deficient in these last. He has either not the faculty or not the will to impregnate his subject by an effort of pure invention. The execution also is much upon a par with the more ephemeral effusions of the press. It is light, agreeable, effeminate, diffuse. Sir Walter's Muse is a *Modern Antique.* The smooth, glossy texture of his verse contrasts happily with the quaint, uncouth, rugged materials of which it is composed, and takes away any appearance of heaviness or harshness from the body of local traditions and obsolete costume. We see grim knights and iron armour; but then they are woven in silk with a careless, delicate hand, and have the softness of flowers. The poet's figures might be compared to old tapestries copied on the finest velvet:—they are not like Raphael's *Cartoons;* but they are very like Mr. Westall's drawings which accompany, and are intended to illustrate, them.

This facility and grace of execution is the more remarkable, as a story goes, that not long before the appearance of the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," Sir Walter (then Mr.) Scott, having, in the company of a friend, to cross the Frith of Forth in a ferry-boat, they proposed to beguile the time by writing a number of verses on a given subject, and that, at the end of an hour's hard study, they found they had produced only six lines between them. "It is plain," said the unconscious author to his fellow-labourer, "that you and I need never think of getting our living by writing poetry!" In a year or so after this he set to work, and poured out quarto upon quarto, as if they had been drops of water. As to the rest, and compared with true and great poets, our Scottish Minstrel is but "a metre ballad-monger." We would rather have written one song of Burns', or a single passage in Lord Byron's "Heaven and Earth," or one of Wordsworth's "fancies and good-nights," than all his epics. What is he to Spenser, over whose immortal, ever-amiable verse beauty hovers and trembles, and who has shed the purple light of

Fancy from his ambrosial wings over all nature? What is there of the might of Milton, whose head is canopied in the blue serene, and who takes us to sit with him there? What is there in his ambling rhymes of the deep pathos of Chaucer? Or of the o'er-informing power of Shakspeare, whose eye, watching alike the minutest traces of character and the strongest movements of passion, "glances from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven," and with the lambent flame of genius, playing round each object, lights up the universe in a robe of its own radiance? Sir Walter has no voluntary power of combination: all his associations (as we said before) are those of habit or of tradition. He is a mere narrative and descriptive poet, garrulous of the old time. The definition of his poetry is a pleasing superficiality.

Not so of his NOVELS AND ROMANCES. There we turn over a new leaf—another and the same—the same in matter, but in form, in power, how different! The Author of "Waverley" has got rid of the tagging of rhymes, the eking out of syllables, the supplying of epithets, the colours of style, the grouping of his characters, and the regular march of events, and comes to the point at once, and strikes at the heart of his subject, without dismay and without disguise. His poetry was a lady's waiting-maid, dressed out in cast-off finery: his prose is a beautiful, rustic nymph, that, like Dorothea in "Don Quixote," when she is surprised with dishevelled tresses bathing her naked feet in the brook, looks round her, abashed at the admiration her charms have excited! The grand secret of the author's success in these latter productions is, that he has completely got rid of the trammels of authorship, and torn off at one rent (as Jack got rid of so many yards of lace in the "Tale of a Tub") all the ornaments of fine writing and worn-out sentimentality.

All is fresh, as from the hand of nature: by going a century or two back and laying the scene in a remote and uncultivated district, all becomes new and startling in the present advanced period. Highland manners, characters, scenery, superstitions: Northern dialect and costume: the wars, the religion, and politics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, give a charming and wholesome relief to the fastidious refinement and "over-laboured lassitude" of modern readers, like the effect of plunging a nervous valetudinarian into a cold bath. . . .

Sir Walter has found out (oh rare discovery!) that facts are better than fiction, that there is no romance like the romance of real life, and that, if we can but arrive at what men feel, do, and say in striking and singular situations, the result will be more lively, audible, and full of vent" than the fine-spun cobwebs of the brain. With

reverence be it spoken, he is like the man who, having to imitate the squeaking of a pig upon the stage, brought the animal under his coat with him. Our author has conjured up the actual people he has to deal with, or as much as he could get of them, in "their habits as they lived." He has ransacked old chronicles, and poured the contents upon his page; he has squeezed out musty records; he has consulted wayfaring pilgrims, bed-rid sybils. He has invoked the spirits of the air; he has conversed with the living and the dead, and let them tell their story their own way; and by borrowing of others has enriched his own genius with everlasting variety, truth, and freedom. He has taken his materials from the original, authentic sources in large concrete masses, and not tampered with or too much frittered them away.

He is only the amanuensis of truth and history. It is impossible to say how fine his writings in consequence are, unless we could describe how fine nature is. All that portion of the history of his country that he has touched upon (wide as the scope is)—the manners, the personages, the events, the scenery—lives over again in his volumes. Nothing is wanting—the illusion is complete. There is a hurtling in the air, a trampling of feet upon the ground, as these perfect representations of human character or fanciful belief come thronging back upon our imaginations. We will merely recall a few of the subjects of his pencil to the reader's recollection, for nothing we could add, by way of note or commendation, could make the impression more vivid.

There is (first and foremost, because the earliest of our acquaintance) the Baron of Bradwardine, stately, kind-hearted, whimsical, pedantic; and Flora MacIvor (whom even *we* forgive for her Jacobitism), the fierce Vich Ian Vohr, and Evan Dhu, constant in death, and Davie Gellatly roasting his eggs or turning his rhymes with restless volubility, and the two stag-hounds that met Waverley, as fine as ever Titian painted, or Paul Veronese. Then there is old Balfour of Burley, brandishing his sword and his Bible, with fire-eyed fury, trying a fall with the insolent, gigantic Bothwell at the 'Change-house, and vanquishing him at the noble battle of Loudon Hill; there is Bothwell himself, drawn to the life: proud, cruel, selfish, profligate, but with the love-letters of the gentle Agnes (written thirty years before) and his verses to her memory found in his pocket after his death. In the same volume of "Old Mortality" is that lone figure, like a figure in Scripture, of the woman sitting on the stone at the turning to the mountain, to warn Burley that there is a lion in his path; and the fawning Claverhouse, beautiful as a panther, smooth-looking, blood-spotted; and the fanatics, Macbriar

and Mucklewrath, crazed with zeal and sufferings; and the inflexible Morton and the faithful Edith, who refused to "give her hand to another while her heart was with her lover in the deep and dead sea."

And in the "Heart of Mid-Lothian" we have Effie Deans (that sweet, faded flower), and Jeanie, her more than sister, and old David Deans, the patriarch of St. Leonard's Crags, and Butler, and Dumbiedykes, eloquent in his silence, and Mr. Bartoline Saddletree and his prudent helpmate, and Porteous swinging in the wind, and Madge Wildfire, full of finery and madness, and her ghastly mother. Again, there is Meg Merrilies, standing on her rock, stretched on her bier with "her head to the east," and Dirk Hatterick (equal to Shakspeare's Master Barnardine), and Glossin, the soul of an attorney, and Dandy Dinmont, with his terrier-pack and his pony Dumple, and the fiery Colonel Mannering, and the modish old counsellor Pleydell, and Dominie Sampson, and Rob Roy (like the eagle in his eyry), and Bailie Nicol Jarvie, and the inimitable Major Galbraith, and Rashleigh Osbaldistone, and Die Vernon, the best of secret-keepers. And in the "Antiquary," the ingenious and abstruse Mr. Jonathan Oldbuck, and the old beadsman Edie Ochiltree, and that preternatural figure of old Edith Elspeith, a living shadow, in whom the lamp of life had been long extinguished, had it not been fed by remorse and "thick-coming" recollections; and that striking picture of the effects of feudal tyranny and fiendish pride, the unhappy Earl of Glenallan; and the Black Dwarf and his friend Habbie of the Heughfoot (the cheerful hunter), and his cousin Grace Armstrong, fresh and laughing like the morning; and the *Children of the Mist*, and the baying of the bloodhound that tracks their steps at a distance (the hollow echoes are in our ears now), and Amy and her hapless love, and the villain Varney, and the deep voice of George of Douglas—and the immovable Balafre, and Master Oliver the Barber, in "Quentin Durward"—and the quaint humour of the "Fortunes of Nigel," and the comic spirit of "Peveril of the Peak" —and the fine old English romance of "Ivanhoe."

What a list of names! What a host of associations! What a thing is human life! What a power is that of genius! What a world of thought and feeling is thus rescued from oblivion! How many hours of heartfelt satisfaction has our author given to the gay and thoughtless! How many sad hearts has he soothed in pain and solitude! It is no wonder that the public repay with lengthened applause and gratitude the pleasure they receive. He writes as fast as they can read, and he does not write himself down. He is always in the public eye, and we do not tire of him. His worst is better

than any other person's best. His *backgrounds* (and his later works are little else but backgrounds capitally made out) are more attractive than the principal figures and most complicated actions of other writers. His works (taken together) are almost like a new edition of human nature. This is indeed to be an author! . . .

LORD BYRON.

. . . If Sir Walter Scott may be thought by some to have been

> "Born universal heir to all humanity,"

it is plain Lord Byron can set up no such pretension. He is, in a striking degree, the creature of his own will. He holds no communion with his kind, but stands alone without mate or fellow—

> "As if a man were author of himself,
> And owned no other kin."

He is like a solitary peak, all access to which is cut off not more by elevation than distance. He is seated on a lofty eminence, "cloud-capt," or reflecting the last rays of setting suns, and in his poetical moods reminds us of the fabled Titans, retired to a ridgy steep, playing on their Pan's-pipes, and taking up ordinary men and things in their hands with haughty indifference. He raises his subject to himself, or tramples on it; he neither stoops to nor loses himself in it. He exists not by sympathy, but by antipathy. He scorns all things, even himself. Nature must come to him to sit for her picture: he does not go to her. She must consult his time, his convenience, and his humour, and wear a *sombre* or a fantastic garb, or his Lordship turns his back upon her. There is no ease, no unaffected simplicity of manner, no "golden mean." All is strained, or petulant in the extreme. His thoughts are sphered and crystalline; his style "prouder than when blue Iris bends;" his spirit fiery, impatient, wayward, indefatigable. Instead of taking his impressions from without, in entire and almost unimpaired masses, he moulds them according to his own temperament, and heats the materials of his imagination in the furnace of his passions, Lord Byron's verse glows like a flame, consuming everything in its way; Sir Walter Scott's glides like a river: clear, gentle, harmless. The poetry of the first scorches, that of the last scarcely warms. The light of the one proceeds from an internal source, ensanguined,

sullen, fixed; the other reflects the hues of heaven or the face of nature, glancing, vivid, and various.

The productions of the Northern Bard have the rust and the freshness of antiquity about them; those of the Noble Poet cease to startle from their extreme ambition of novelty, both in style and matter. Sir Walter's rhymes are "silly sooth"—

> "And dally with the innocence of thought,
> Like the old age"—

his Lordship's Muse spurns the *olden time*, and affects all the supercilious airs of a modern fine lady and an upstart. The object of the one writer is to restore us to truth and nature: the other chiefly thinks how he shall display his own power, or vent his spleen, or astonish the reader either by starting new subjects and trains of speculation, or by expressing old ones in a more striking and emphatic manner than they have been expressed before. He cares little what it is he says, so that he can say it differently from others. This may account for the charges of plagiarism which have been repeatedly brought against the Noble Poet. If he can borrow an image or sentiment from another, and heighten it by an epithet or an illusion of greater force and beauty than is to be found in the original passage, he thinks he shows his superiority of execution in this in a more marked manner than if the first suggestion had been his own. It is not the value of the observation itself he is solicitous about; but he wishes to shine by contrast —even nature only serves as a foil to set off his style. He therefore takes the thoughts of others (whether contemporaries or not) out of their mouths, and is content to make them his own, to set his stamp upon them, by imparting to them a more meretricious gloss, a higher relief, a greater loftiness of tone, and a characteristic inveteracy of purpose.

Even in those collateral ornaments of modern style, slovenliness, abruptness, and eccentricity (as well as in terseness and significance), Lord Byron, when he pleases, defies competition and surpasses all his contemporaries. Whatever he does, he must do in a more decided and daring manner than any one else; he lounges with extravagance, and yawns so as to alarm the reader! Self-will, passion, the love of singularity, a disdain of himself and of others (with a conscious sense that this is among the ways and means of procuring admiration) are the proper categories of his mind: he is a lordly writer, is above his own reputation, and condescends to the Muses with a scornful grace!

Lord Byron, who in his politics is a *Liberal*, in his genius is haughty and aristocratic: Walter Scott, who is an aristocrat in principle, is popular in his writings, and is (as it were) equally *servile* to nature and to opinion. The genius of Sir Walter is essentially imitative, or "denotes a foregone conclusion:" that of Lord Byron is self-dependent, or at least requires no aid, is governed by no law but the impulses of its own will. We confess, however much we may admire independence of feeling and erectness of spirit in general or practical questions, yet in works of genius we prefer him who bows to the authority of nature, who appeals to actual objects, to mouldering superstitions, to history, observation, and tradition, before him who only consults the pragmatical and restless workings of his own breast, and gives them out as oracles to the world. We like a writer (whether poet or prose-writer) who takes in (or is willing to take in) the range of half the universe in feeling, character, description, much better than we do one who obstinately and invariably shuts himself up in the Bastille of his own ruling passions. In short, we had rather be Sir Walter Scott (meaning thereby the author of "Waverley") than Lord Byron a hundred times over, and for the reason just given, namely, that he casts his descriptions in the mould of nature, ever varying, never tiresome, always interesting and always instructive, instead of casting them constantly in the mould of his own individual impressions.

He gives us man as he is, or as he was, in almost every variety of situation, action, and feeling. Lord Byron makes man after his own image, woman after his own heart; the one is a capricious tyrant, the other a yielding slave; he gives us the misanthrope and the voluptuary by turns; and with these two characters, burning or melting in their own fires, he makes out everlasting centos of himself. He hangs the cloud, the film of his existence over all outward things, sits in the centre of his thoughts, and enjoys dark night, bright day, the glitter and the gloom "in cell monastic." We see the mournful pall, the crucifix, the death's-heads, the faded chaplet of flowers, the gleaming tapers, the agonised brow of genius, the wasted form of beauty; but we are still imprisoned in a dungeon; a curtain intercepts our view; we do not breathe freely the air of nature or of our own thoughts. The other admired author draws aside the curtain, and the veil of egotism is rent; and he shows us the crowd of living men and women, the endless groups, the landscape background, the cloud and the rainbow, and enriches our imaginations and relieves one passion by another, and expands and lightens reflection, and takes away that tightness at the breast which

arises from thinking or wishing to think that there is nothing in the world out of a man's self!

In this point of view, the Author of "Waverley" is one of the greatest teachers of morality that ever lived, by emancipating the mind from petty, narrow, and bigoted prejudices: Lord Byron is the greatest pamperer of those prejudices, by seeming to think there is nothing else worth encouraging but the seeds or the full luxuriant growth of dogmatism and self-conceit. In reading the Scotch Novels, we never think about the author, except from a feeling of curiosity respecting our unknown benefactor: in reading Lord Byron's works, he himself is never absent from our minds. The colouring of Lord Byron's style, however rich and dipped in Tyrian dyes, is nevertheless opaque, is in itself an object of delight and wonder: Sir Walter Scott's is perfectly transparent. In studying the one, you seem to gaze at the figures cut in stained glass, which exclude the view beyond, and where the pure light of heaven is only a means of setting off the gorgeousness of art: in reading the other, you look through a noble window at the clear and varied landscape without. Or to sum up the distinction in one word, Sir Walter Scott is the most *dramatic* writer now living, and Lord Byron is the least so.

It would be difficult to imagine that the Author of "Waverley" is in the smallest degree a pedant, as it would be hard to persuade ourselves that the Author of "Childe Harold" and "Don Juan" is not a coxcomb, though a provoking and sublime one. In this decided preference given to Sir Walter Scott over Lord Byron, we distinctly include the prose-works of the former; for we do not think his poetry alone by any means entitles him to that precedence. Sir Walter in his poetry, though pleasing and natural, is a comparative trifler: it is in his anonymous productions that he has shown himself for what he is.

Intensity is the great and prominent distinction of Lord Byron's writings. He seldom gets beyond force of style, nor has he produced any regular work or masterly whole. He does not prepare any plan beforehand, nor revise and retouch what he has written with polished accuracy. His only object seems to be to stimulate himself and his readers for the moment—to keep both alive, to drive away *ennui*, to substitute a feverish and irritable state of excitement for listless indolence or even calm enjoyment. For this purpose he pitches on any subject at random without much thought or delicacy. He is only impatient to begin, and takes care to adorn and enrich it as he proceeds with "thoughts that breathe and words that burn." He composes (as he himself has said) whether he is in the bath, in his study, or on horseback; he writes as habitually as others talk or

think; and whether we have the inspiration of the Muse or not, we always find the spirit of the man of genius breathing from his verse. He grapples with his subject, and moves, penetrates, and animates it by the electric force of his own feelings. He is often monotonous, extravagant, offensive; but he is never dull or tedious, but when he writes prose.

Lord Byron does not exhibit a new view of nature, or raise insignificant objects into importance by the romantic associations with which he surrounds them, but generally (at least) takes commonplace thoughts and events, and endeavours to express them in stronger and statelier language than others. His poetry stands like a Martello-tower by the side of his subject. He does not, like Mr. Wordsworth, lift poetry from the ground, or create a sentiment out of nothing. He does not describe a daisy or a periwinkle, but the cedar or the cypress: not "poor men's cottages, but princes' palaces." His "Childe Harold" contains a lofty and impassioned review of the great events of history, of the mighty objects left as wrecks of time; but he dwells chiefly on what is familiar to the mind of every schoolboy, has brought out few new traits of feeling or thought, and has done no more than justice to the reader's preconceptions by the sustained force and brilliancy of his style and imagery.

Lord Byron's earlier productions, "Lara," the "Corsair," &c., were wild and gloomy romances, put into rapid and shining verse. They discover the madness of poetry, together with the inspiration: sullen, moody, capricious, fierce, inexorable: gloating on beauty, thirsting for revenge: hurrying from the extremes of pleasure to pain, but with nothing permanent, nothing healthy or natural. The gaudy decorations and the morbid sentiments remind one of flowers strewed over the face of death! In his "Childe Harold" (as has been just observed) he assumes a lofty and philosophic tone, and "reasons high of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate." He takes the highest points in the history of the world, and comments on them from a more commanding eminence. He shows us the crumbling monuments of time; he invokes the great names, the mighty spirit of antiquity. The universe is changed into a stately mausoleum: in solemn measures he chaunts a hymn to fame. Lord Byron has strength and elevation enough to fill up the moulds of our classical and time-hallowed recollections, and to rekindle the earliest aspirations of the mind after greatness and true glory with a pen of fire. The names of Tasso, of Ariosto, of Dante, of Cincinnatus, of Cæsar, of Scipio, lose nothing of their pomp or their lustre in his hands, and when he begins and continues a strain of panegyric

on such subjects, we indeed sit down with him to a banquet of rich praise, brooding over imperishable glories,

"Till Contemplation has her fill."

Lord Byron seems to cast himself indignantly from "this bank and shoal of time," or the frail tottering bark that bears up modern reputation, into the huge sea of ancient renown, and to revel there with untired, outspread plume. Even this in him is spleen; his contempt of his contemporaries makes him turn back to the lustrous past, or project himself forward to the dim future! Lord Byron's tragedies, "Faliero," "Sardanapalus," &c., are not equal to his other works. They want the essence of the drama. They abound in speeches and descriptions, such as he himself might make either to himself or others, lolling on his couch of a morning, but do not carry the reader out of the poet's mind to the scenes and events recorded. They have neither action, character, nor interest, but are a sort of *gossamer* tragedies, spun out and glittering, and spreading a flimsy veil over the face of nature. Yet he spins them on. Of all that he has done in this way, the "Heaven and Earth" (the same subject as Mr. Moore's "Loves of the Angels") is the best. We prefer it even to "Manfred. "Manfred" is merely himself with a fancy-drapery on. But, in the dramatic fragment published in the *Liberal*, the space between heaven and earth, the stage on which his characters have to pass to and fro, seems to fill his Lordship's imagination; and the "Deluge," which he has so finely described, may be said to have drowned all his own idle humours.

We must say we think little of our author's turn for satire. His "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" is dogmatical and insolent, but without refinement or point. He calls people names, and tries to transfix a character with an epithet, which does not stick, because it has no other foundation than his own petulance and spite; or he endeavours to degrade by alluding to some circumstance of external situation. He says of Mr. Wordsworth's poetry, that "it is his aversion." That may be: but whose fault is it? This is the satire of a lord, who is accustomed to have all his whims or dislikes taken for gospel, and who cannot be at the pains to do more than signify his contempt or displeasure. If a great man meets with a rebuff which he does not like, he turns on his heel, and this passes for a repartee. The Noble Author says of a celebrated barrister and critic, that he was "born in a garret sixteen stories high." The insinuation is not true, or, if it were, it is low. The allusion degrades the person who makes it, not him to whom it is applied. This is also the satire of a person of birth and quality, who measures all

merit by external rank, that is, by his own standard. So his Lordship in a "Letter to the Editor of my Grandmother's Review," addresses him fifty times as "*my dear Robarts;*" nor is there any other wit in the article. This is surely a mere assumption of superiority from his Lordship's rank, and is the sort of *quizzing* he might use to a person who came to hire himself as a valet to him at *Long's*. The waiters might laugh; the public will not. In like manner, in the controversy about Pope, he claps Mr. Bowles on the back with a coarse facetious familiarity, as if he were his chaplain whom he had invited to dine with him, or was about to present to a benefice. The reverend divine might submit to the obligation; but he has no occasion to subscribe to the jest. If it is a jest that Mr. Bowles should be a parson and Lord Byron a peer, the world knew this before; there was no need to write a pamphlet to prove it.

The "Don Juan" indeed has great power; but its power is owing to the force of the serious writing, and to the contrast between that and the flashy passages with which it is interlarded. From the sublime to the ridiculous there is but one step. You laugh and are surprised that any one should turn round and *travestie* himself: the drollery is in the utter discontinuity of ideas and feelings. He makes virtue serve as a foil to vice; *dandyism* is (for want of any other) a variety of genius. A classical intoxication is followed by the splashing of soda-water, by frothy effusions of ordinary bile. After the lightning and the hurricane, we are introduced to the interior of the cabin and the contents of the wash-hand basins. The solemn hero of tragedy plays *Scrub* in the farce. This is "very tolerable and not to be endured."

The noble Lord is almost the only writer who has prostituted his talents in this way. He hallows in order to desecrate, takes a pleasure in defacing the images of beauty his hands have wrought, and raises our hopes and our belief in goodness to heaven only to dash them to the earth again, and break them in pieces the more effectually from the very height they have fallen. Our enthusiasm for genius or virtue is thus turned into a jest by the very person who has kindled it, and who thus fatally quenches the spark of both. It is not that Lord Byron is sometimes serious and sometimes trifling, sometimes profligate and sometimes moral, but when he is most serious and most moral, he is only preparing to mortify the unsuspecting reader by putting a pitiful *hoax* upon him. This is a most unaccountable anomaly. It is as if the eagle were to build its eyry in a common sewer, or the owl were seen soaring to the mid-day sun. Such a sight might make one laugh, but one would not wish or expect it to occur more than once!

In fact, Lord Byron is the spoiled child of fame as well as fortune. He has taken a surfeit of popularity, and is not contented to delight, unless he can shock, the public. He would force them to admire in spite of decency and common-sense; he would have them read what they would read in no one but himself, or he would not give a rush for their applause. He is to be "a chartered libertine," from whom insults are favours, whose contempt is to be a new incentive to admiration. His Lordship is hard to please: he is equally averse to notice or neglect, enraged at censure and scorning praise. He tries the patience of the town to the very utmost, and when they show signs of weariness or disgust, threatens to *discard* them. He says he will write on, whether he is read or not. He would never write another page, if it were not to court popular applause, or to affect a superiority over it. In this respect also Lord Byron presents a striking contrast to Sir Walter Scott. The latter takes what part of the public favour falls to his share, without grumbling (to be sure, he has no reason to complain); the former is always quarrelling with the world about his *modicum* of applause, the *spolia opima* of vanity, and ungraciously throwing the offerings of incense heaped on his shrine back in the faces of his admirers.

Again, there is no taint in the writings of the Author of "Waverley;" all is fair and natural and *above-board;* he never outrages the public mind. He introduces no anomalous character, broaches no staggering opinion. If he goes back to old prejudices and superstitions as a relief to the modern reader, while Lord Byron floats on swelling paradoxes—

"Like proud seas under him;"

if the one defers too much to the spirit of antiquity, the other panders to the spirit of the age, goes to the very edge of extreme and licentious speculation, and breaks his neck over it. Grossness and levity are the playthings of his pen. It is a ludicrous circumstance that he should have dedicated his "Cain" to the worthy Baronet! Did the latter ever acknowledge the obligation? We are not nice, not very nice; but we do not particularly approve those subjects that shine chiefly from their rottenness: nor do we wish to see the Muses dressed out in the flounces of a false or questionable philosophy, like Portia and Nerissa in the garb of Doctors of Law. We like metaphysics as well as Lord Byron; but not to see them making flowery speeches, nor dancing a measure in the fetters of verse. We have as good as hinted that his Lordship's poetry consists mostly of a tissue of superb commonplaces; even his paradoxes are *commonplace.* They are familiar in the schools: they are only

new and striking in his dramas and stanzas by being out of place. In a word, we think that poetry moves best within the circle of nature and received opinion: speculative theory and subtle casuistry are forbidden ground to it.

But Lord Byron often wanders into this ground wantonly, wilfully, and unwarrantably. The only apology we can conceive for the spirit of some of Lord Byron's writings, is the spirit of some of those opposed to him. They would provoke a man to write anything. "Farthest from them is best." The extravagance and license of the one seems a proper antidote to the bigotry and narrowness of the other. The first "Vision of Judgment" was a set-off to the second, though

"None but itself could be its parallel."

Perhaps the chief cause of most of Lord Byron's errors is, that he is that anomaly in letters and in society, a Noble Poet. It is a double privilege, almost too much for humanity. He has all the pride of birth and genius. The strength of his imagination leads him to indulge in fantastic opinions; the elevation of his rank sets censure at defiance. He becomes a pampered egotist. He has a seat in the House of Lords, a niche in the Temple of Fame. Everyday mortals, opinions, things, are not good enough for him to touch or think of. A mere nobleman is, in his estimation, but "the tenth transmitter of a foolish face:" a mere man of genius is no better than a worm. His Muse is also a lady of quality. The people are not polite enough for him; the Court is not sufficiently intellectual. He hates the one and despises the other. By hating and despising others, he does not learn to be satisfied with himself. A fastidious man soon grows querulous and splenetic. If there is nobody but ourselves to come up to our idea of fancied perfection, we easily get tired of our idol.

When a man is tired of what he is, by a natural perversity he sets up for what he is not. If he is a poet, he pretends to be a metaphysician: if he is a patrician in rank and feeling, he would fain be one of the people. His ruling motive is not the love of the people, but of distinction: not of truth, but of singularity. He patronises men of letters out of vanity, and deserts them from caprice or from the advice of friends. He embarks in an obnoxious publication to provoke censure, and leaves it to shift for itself for fear of scandal. We do not like Sir Walter's gratuitous servility: we like Lord Byron's preposterous *liberalism* little better. He may affect the principles of equality, but he resumes his privilege of peerage, upon occasion. His Lordship has made great offers of service to the

Greeks—money and horses. He is at present in Cephalonia, waiting the event!

. . . . . .

We had written thus far when news came of the death of Lord Byron, and put an end at once to a strain of somewhat peevish invective, which was intended to meet his eye, not to insult his memory. Had we known that we were writing his epitaph, we must have done it with a different feeling. As it is, we think it better and more like himself, to let what we had written stand, than to take up our leaden shafts, and try to melt them into "tears of sensibility," or mould them into dull praise and an affected show of candour. We were not silent during the author's lifetime, either for his reproof or encouragement (such as we could give, and *he* did not disdain to accept), nor can we now turn undertakers' men to fix the glittering plate upon his coffin, or fall into the procession of popular woe. Death cancels everything but truth, and strips a man of everything but genius and virtue. It is a sort of natural canonisation. It makes the meanest of us sacred; it instals the poet in his immortality, and lifts him to the skies. Death is the great assayer of the sterling ore of talent. At his touch the drossy particles fall off—the irritable, the personal, the gross—and mingle with the dust; the finer and more ethereal part mounts with the winged spirit to watch over our latest memory, and protect our bones from insult. We consign the least worthy qualities to oblivion, and cherish the nobler and imperishable nature with double pride and fondness.

Nothing could show the real superiority of genius in a more striking point of view than the idle contests and the public indifference about the place of Lord Byron's interment, whether in Westminster Abbey or his own family vault. A king must have a coronation—a nobleman a funeral-procession. The man is nothing without the pageant. The poet's cemetery is the human mind, in which he sows the seeds of never-ending thought—his monument is to be found in his works:

> "Nothing can cover his high fame but Heaven;
> No pyramids set off his memory,
> But the eternal substance of his greatness."

Lord Byron is dead: he also died a martyr to his zeal in the cause of freedom, for the last, best hopes of man. Let that be his excuse and his epitaph!

WORDSWORTH.

Mr. Wordsworth's genius is a pure emanation of the Spirit of the Age. Had he lived in any other period of the world, he would never have been heard of. As it is, he has some difficulty to contend with the hebetude of his intellect and the meanness of his subject. With him "lowliness is young ambition's ladder:" but he finds it a toil to climb in this way the steep of Fame. His homely Muse can hardly raise her wing from the ground, nor spread her hidden glories to the sun. He has "no figures nor no fantasies, which busy *passion* draws in the brains of men:" neither the gorgeous machinery of mythologic lore nor the splendid colours of poetic diction. His style is vernacular: he delivers household truths. He sees nothing loftier than human hopes, nothing deeper than the human heart. This he probes, this he tampers with, this he poises, with all its incalculable weight of thought and feeling, in his hands, and at the same time calms the throbbing pulses of his own heart by keeping his eye ever fixed on the face of nature. If he can make the life-blood flow from the wounded breast, this is the living colouring with which he paints his verse: if he can assuage the pain or close up the wound with the balm of solitary musing, or the healing power of plants and herbs and "skyey influences," this is the sole triumph of his art. He takes the simplest elements of nature and of the human mind, the mere abstract conditions inseparable from our being, and tries to compound a new system of poetry from them; and [he] has perhaps succeeded as well as any one could. "*Nihil humani a me alienum puto*" is the motto of his works. He thinks nothing low or indifferent of which this can be affirmed: everything that professes to be more than this, that is not an absolute essence of truth and feeling, he holds to be vitiated, false, and spurious. In a word, his poetry is founded on setting up an opposition (and pushing it to the utmost length) between the natural and the artificial, between the spirit of humanity and the spirit of fashion and of the world.

It is one of the innovations of the time. It partakes of, and is carried along with, the revolutionary movement of our age: the political changes of the day were the model on which he formed and conducted his poetical experiments. His Muse (it cannot be denied, and without this we cannot explain its character at all) is a levelling one. It proceeds on a principle of equality, and strives to reduce all things to the same standard. It is distinguished by a proud humility. It relies upon its own resources, and disdains

external show and relief. It takes the commonest events and objects, as a test to prove that nature is always interesting from its inherent truth and beauty, without any of the ornaments of dress or pomp of circumstances to set it off. Hence the unaccountable mixture of seeming simplicity and real abstruseness in the "Lyrical Ballads." Fools have laughed at, wise men scarcely understand, them. He takes a subject or a story merely as pegs or loops to hang thought and feeling on; the incidents are trifling, in proportion to his contempt for imposing appearances; the reflections are profound, according to the gravity and aspiring pretensions of his mind.

His popular, inartificial style gets rid (at a blow) of all the trappings of verse, of all the high places of poetry: "the cloud-capt towers, the solemn temples, the gorgeous palaces," are swept to the ground, and "like the baseless fabric of a vision, leave not a wreck behind." All the traditions of learning, all the superstitions of age, are obliterated and effaced. We begin *de novo* on a *tabula rasa* of poetry. The purple pall, the nodding plume of tragedy, are exploded as mere pantomime and trick, to return to the simplicity of truth and nature. Kings, queens, priests, nobles, the altar and the throne, the distinctions of rank, birth, wealth, power, "the judge's robe, the marshal's truncheon, the ceremony that to great ones 'longs," are not to be found here. The author tramples on the pride of art with greater pride. The Ode and Epode, the Strophe and the Antistrophe, he laughs to scorn. The harp of Homer, the trump of Pindar and of Alcæus, are still. The decencies of costume, the decorations of vanity, are stripped off without mercy as barbarous, idle, and Gothic. The jewels in the crisped hair, the diadem on the polished brow, are thought meretricious, theatrical, vulgar; and nothing contents his fastidious taste beyond a simple garland of flowers. Neither does he avail himself of the advantages which nature or accident holds out to him. He chooses to have his subject a foil to his invention, to owe nothing but to himself.

He gathers manna in the wilderness; he strikes the barren rock for the gushing moisture. He elevates the mean by the strength of his own aspirations, he clothes the naked with beauty and grandeur from the stores of his own recollections. No cypress grove loads his verse with funeral pomp: but his imagination lends "a sense of joy"

> "To the bare trees and mountains bare,
> And grass in the green field."

No storm, no shipwreck, startles us by its horrors: but the rainbow

lifts its head in the cloud, and the breeze sighs through the withered fern. No sad vicissitude of fate, no overwhelming catastrophe in nature, deforms his page: but the dewdrop glitters on the bending flower, the tear collects in the glistening eye.

> "Beneath the hills, along the flowery vales,
> The generations are prepared; the pangs,
> The internal pangs are ready; the dread strife
> Of poor humanity's afflicted will,
> Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny."

As the lark ascends from its low bed on fluttering wing, and salutes the morning skies, so Mr. Wordsworth's unpretending Muse in russet guise scales the summits of reflection, while it makes the round earth its footstool and its home!

Possibly a good deal of this may be regarded as the effect of disappointed views and an inverted ambition. Prevented by native pride and indolence from climbing the ascent of learning or greatness, taught by political opinions to say to the vain pomp and glory of the world, "I hate ye," seeing the path of classical and artificial poetry blocked up by the cumbrous ornaments of style and turgid *commonplaces*, so that nothing more could be achieved in that direction but by the most ridiculous bombast or the tamest servility, he has turned back, partly from the bias of his mind, partly perhaps from a judicious policy—has struck into the sequestered vale of humble life, sought out the Muse among sheep-cotes and hamlets, and the peasant's mountain-haunts, has discarded all the tinsel pageantry of verse, and endeavoured (not in vain) to aggrandise the trivial, and add the charm of novelty to the familiar. No one has shown the same imagination in raising trifles into importance: no one has displayed the same pathos in treating of the simplest feelings of the heart. Reserved, yet haughty, having no unruly or violent passions (or those passions having been early suppressed), Mr. Wordsworth has passed his life in solitary musing or in daily converse with the face of nature. He exemplifies in an eminent degree the *association;* for his poetry has no other source or character. He has dwelt among pastoral scenes, till each object has become connected with a thousand feelings, a link in the chain of thought, a fibre of his own heart. Every one is by habit and familiarity strongly attached to the place of his birth, or to objects that recall the most pleasing and eventful circumstances of his life.

But to the author of the "Lyrical Ballads" nature is a kind of home; and he may be said to take a personal interest in the universe. There is no image so insignificant that it has not in

some mood or other found the way into his heart: no sound that does not awaken the memory of other years—

> "To him the meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

The daisy looks up to him with sparkling eye as an old acquaintance: the cuckoo haunts him with sounds of early youth not to be expressed: a linnet's nest startles him with boyish delight: an old withered thorn is weighed down with a heap of recollections: a grey cloak, seen on some wild moor, torn by the wind or drenched in the rain, afterwards becomes an object of imagination to him: even the lichens on the rock have a life and being in his thoughts. He has described all these objects in a way and with an intensity of feeling that no one else had done before him, and has given a new view or aspect of nature. He is in this sense the most original poet now living, and the one whose writings could the least be spared: for they have no substitute elsewhere. The vulgar do not read them; the learned, who see all things through books, do not understand them; the great despise. The fashionable may ridicule them: but the author has created himself an interest in the heart of the retired and lonely student of nature, which can never die.

Persons of this class will still continue to feel what he has felt: he has expressed what they might in vain wish to express, except with glistening eye and faltering tongue! There is a lofty philosophic tone, a thoughtful humanity, infused into his pastoral vein. Remote from the passions and events of the great world, he has communicated interest and dignity to the primal movements of the heart of man, and ingrafted his own conscious reflections on the casual thoughts of hinds and shepherds. Nursed amidst the grandeur of mountain scenery, he has stooped to have a nearer view of the daisy under his feet, or plucked a branch of white-thorn from the spray: but, in describing it, his mind seems imbued with the majesty and solemnity of the objects around him. The tall rock lifts its head in the erectness of his spirit; the cataract roars in the sound of his verse; and in its dim and mysterious meaning the mists seem to gather in the hollows of Helvellyn, and the forked Skiddaw hovers in the distance. There is little mention of mountainous scenery in Mr. Wordsworth's poetry; but by internal evidence one might be almost sure that it was written in a mountainous country, from its bareness, its simplicity, its loftiness and its depth!

His later philosophic productions have a somewhat different character. They are a departure from, a dereliction of, his first

principles. They are classical and courtly. They are polished in style without being gaudy, dignified in subject without affectation. They seem to have been composed, not in a cottage at Grasmere, but among the half-inspired groves and stately recollections of Cole-Orton. We might allude in particular, for examples of what we mean, to the lines on a Picture by Claude Lorraine and to the exquisite poem entitled "Laodamia." The last of these breathes the pure spirit of the finest fragments of antiquity—the sweetness, the gravity, the strength, the beauty, and the languor of death—

"Calm contemplation and majestic pains."

Its glossy brilliancy arises from the perfection of the finishing, like that of a careful sculpture, not from gaudy colouring. The texture of the thoughts has the smoothness and solidity of marble. It is a poem that might be read aloud in Elysium, and the spirits of departed heroes and sages would gather round to listen to it!

Mr. Wordsworth's philosophic poetry, with a less glowing aspect and less tumult in the veins than Lord Byron's on similar occasions, bends a calmer and keener eye on mortality; the impression, if less vivid, is more pleasing and permanent; and we confess it (perhaps it is a want of taste and proper feeling) that there are lines and poems of our author's that we think of ten times for once that we recur to any of Lord Byron's. Or if there are any of the latter's writings that we can dwell upon in the same way, that is, as lasting and heart-felt sentiments, it is when, laying aside his usual pomp and pretension, he descends with Mr. Wordsworth to the common ground of a disinterested humanity. It may be considered as characteristic of our poet's writings, that they either make no impression on the mind at all, seem mere *nonsense-verses*, or that they leave a mark behind them that never wears out. They either

"Fall blunted from the indurated breast,"

without any perceptible result, or they absorb it like a passion. To one class of readers he appears sublime, to another (and we fear the largest) ridiculous. He has probably realised Milton's wish,—"and fit audience found, though few:" but we suspect he is not reconciled to the alternative.

There are delightful passages in the "Excursion," both of natural description and of inspired reflection (passages of the latter kind that in the sound of the thoughts and of the swelling language resemble heavenly symphonies, mournful *requiems* over the grave of human hopes); but we must add, in justice and in sincerity, that we

think it impossible that this work should ever become popular, even in the same degree as the "Lyrical Ballads." It affects a system without having any intelligible clue to one, and, instead of unfolding a principle in various and striking lights, repeats the same conclusions till they become flat and insipid. Mr. Wordsworth's mind is obtuse, except as it is the organ and the receptacle of accumulated feelings: it is not analytic, but synthetic; it is reflecting, rather than theoretical. The "EXCURSION," we believe, fell still-born from the press. There was something abortive, and clumsy, and ill-judged in the attempt. It was long and laboured. The personages, for the most part, were low, the fare rustic; the plan raised expectations which were not fulfilled; and the effect was like being ushered into a stately hall and invited to sit down to a splendid banquet in the company of clowns, and with nothing but successive courses of apple-dumplings served up. It was not even *toujours perdrix!*

Mr. Wordsworth, in his person, is above the middle size, with marked features and an air somewhat stately and quixotic. He reminds one of some of Holbein's heads: grave, saturnine, with a slight indication of sly humour, kept under by the manners of the age or by the pretensions of the person. He has a peculiar sweetness in his smile, and great depth and manliness and a rugged harmony in the tones of his voice. His manner of reading his own poetry is particularly imposing; and in his favourite passages his eye beams with preternatural lustre, and the meaning labours slowly up from his swelling breast. No one who has seen him at these moments could go away with an impression that he was a "man of no mark or likelihood." Perhaps the comment of his face and voice is necessary to convey a full idea of his poetry. His language may not be intelligible; but his manner is not to be mistaken. It is clear that he is either mad or inspired. In company, even in a *tête-à-tête*, Mr. Wordsworth is often silent, indolent, and reserved. If he is become verbose and oracular of late years, he was not so in his better days. He threw out a bold or an indifferent remark without either effort or pretension, and relapsed into musing again. He shone most (because he seemed most roused and animated) in reciting his own poetry, or in talking about it. He sometimes gave striking views of his feelings and trains of association in composing certain passages; or, if one did not always understand his distinctions, still there was no want of interest: there was a latent meaning worth inquiring into, like a vein of ore that one cannot exactly hit upon at the moment, but of which there are sure indications. His standard of poetry is high and severe, almost to exclusiveness.

He admits of nothing below, scarcely of anything above, himself. It is fine to hear him talk of the way in which certain subjects should have been treated by eminent poets, according to his notions of the art. Thus he finds fault with Dryden's description of Bacchus in the "Alexander's Feast," as if he were a mere good-looking youth or boon companion—

"Flushed with a purple grace,
He shows his honest face"—

instead of representing the God returning from the conquest of India, crowned with vine-leaves and drawn by panthers, and followed by troops of satyrs, of wild men and animals that he had tamed. You would think, in hearing him speak on this subject, that you saw Titian's picture of the meeting of "Bacchus and Ariadne"—so classic were his conceptions, so glowing his style.

Milton is his great idol, and he sometimes dares to compare himself with him. His Sonnets, indeed, have something of the same high-raised tone and prophetic spirit. Chaucer is another prime favourite of his, and he has been at the pains to modernise some of the "Canterbury Tales." Those persons who look upon Mr. Wordsworth as a merely puerile writer must be rather at a loss to account for his strong predilection for such geniuses as Dante and Michael Angelo. We do not think our author has any very cordial sympathy with Shakspeare. How should he? Shakspeare was the least of an egotist of anybody in the world. He does not much relish the variety and scope of dramatic composition. "He hates those interlocutions between Lucius and Caius." Yet Mr. Wordsworth himself wrote a tragedy when he was young; and we have heard the following energetic lines quoted from it, as put into the mouth of a person smit with remorse for some rash crime:

"Action is momentary,
The motion of a muscle this way or that;
Suffering is long, obscure and infinite!"

Perhaps for want of light and shade, and the unshackled spirit of the drama, this performance was never brought forward. Our critic has a great dislike to Gray, and a fondness for Thomson and Collins. It is mortifying to hear him speak of Pope and Dryden, whom, because they have been supposed to have all the possible excellences of poetry, he will allow to have none. . . .

FRANCIS JEFFREY.

. . . We do not implicitly bow to the political opinions nor to the critical decisions of the *Edinburgh Review;* but we must do

justice to the talent with which they are supported, and to the tone of manly explicitness in which they are delivered. They are eminently characteristic of the spirit of the age, as it is the express object of the *Quarterly Review* to discountenance and extinguish that spirit, both in theory and in practice. The *Edinburgh Review* stands upon the ground of opinion; it asserts the supremacy of intellect. The pre-eminence it claims is from an acknowledged superiority of talent and information, and literary attainment; and it does not build one tittle of its influence on ignorance, or prejudice, or authority, or personal malevolence. It takes up a question, and argues it *pro* and *con* with great knowledge and boldness and skill; it points out an absurdity, and runs it down fairly, and according to the evidence adduced. In the former case, its conclusions may be wrong; there may be a bias in the mind of the writer; but he states the arguments and circumstances on both sides, from which a judgment is to be formed. It is not his cue: he has neither the effrontery nor the meanness to falsify facts or to suppress objections.

In the latter case, or where a vein of sarcasm or irony is resorted to, the ridicule is not barbed by some allusion (false or true) to private history; the object of it has brought the infliction on himself by some literary folly or political delinquency, which is referred to as the understood and justifiable provocation, instead of being held up to scorn as a knave for not being a tool, or as a blockhead for thinking for himself. In the *Edinburgh Review* the talents of those on the opposite side are always extolled *pleno ore;* in the *Quarterly Review* they are denied altogether; and the justice that is in this way withheld from them is compensated by a proportionable supply of personal abuse. . . .

Mr. Jeffrey is the Editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, and is understood to have contributed nearly a fourth part of the articles from its commencement. No man is better qualified for this situation, nor indeed so much so. He is certainly a person in advance of the age, and yet perfectly fitted both from knowledge and habits of mind to put a curb upon its rash and headlong spirit. He is thoroughly acquainted with the progress and pretensions of modern literature and philosophy; and to this he adds the natural acuteness and discrimination of the logician with the habitual caution and coolness of his profession. If the *Edinburgh Review* may be considered as the organ of or at all pledged to a party, that party is at least a respectable one, and is placed in the middle between two extremes. The Editor is bound to lend a patient hearing to the most paradoxical opinions and extravagant theories which have resulted in our times from the "infinite agitation of

wit," but he is disposed to qualify them by a number of practical objections, of speculative doubts, of checks and drawbacks, arising out of actual circumstances and prevailing opinions, or the frailties of human nature. He has a great range of knowledge, an incessant activity of mind; but the suspension of his judgment, the well-balanced moderation of his sentiments, is the consequence of the very discursiveness of his reason. What may be considered as a *commonplace* conclusion is often the result of a comprehensive view of all the circumstances of a case. Paradox, violence, nay, even originality of conception is not seldom owing to our dwelling long and pertinaciously on some one part of a subject, instead of attending to the whole.

Mr. Jeffrey is neither a bigot nor an enthusiast. He is not the dupe of the prejudices of others, nor of his own. He is not wedded to any dogma; he is not long the sport of any whim. Before he can settle in any fond or fantastic opinion, another starts up to match it, like beads on sparkling wine. A too restless display of talent, a too undisguised statement of all that can be said for and against a question, is perhaps the great fault that is to be attributed to him. Where there is so much power and prejudice to contend with in the opposite scale, it may be thought that the balance of truth can hardly be held with a slack or an even hand, and that the infusion of a little more visionary speculation, of a little more popular indignation, into the great Whig Review would be an advantage both to itself and to the cause of freedom. Much of this effect is chargeable less on an Epicurean levity of feeling or on party-trammels than on real sanguineness of disposition and a certain fineness of professional tact.

Our sprightly Scotchman is not of a desponding and gloomy turn of mind. He argues well for the future hopes of mankind from the smallest beginnings, watches the slow, gradual, reluctant growth of liberal views, and smiling sees the aloe of Reform blossom at the end of a hundred years; while the habitual subtlety of his mind makes him perceive decided advantages, where vulgar ignorance or passion sees only doubts and difficulty; and a flaw in an adversary's argument stands him instead of the shout of a mob, the votes of a majority, or the fate of a pitched battle. The Editor is satisfied with his own conclusions, and does not make himself uneasy about the fate of mankind. The issue, he thinks, will verify his moderate and well-founded expectations. We believe, also, that late events have given a more decided turn to Mr. Jeffrey's mind, and that he feels that as, in the struggle between liberty and slavery, the views of the one party have been laid bare with their

success, so the exertions on the other side should become more strenuous, and a more positive stand be made against the avowed and appalling encroachments of priestcraft and arbitrary power.

The characteristics of Mr. Jeffrey's general style as a writer correspond, we think, with what we have here stated as the characteristics of his mind. He is a master of the foils; he makes an exulting display of the dazzling fence of wit and argument. His strength consists in great range of knowledge, an equal familiarity with the principles and the details of a subject, and in a glancing brilliancy and rapidity of style. Indeed, we doubt whether the brilliancy of his manner does not resolve itself into the rapidity, the variety and aptness of his illustrations. His pen is never at a loss, never stands still, and would dazzle for this reason alone, like an eye that is ever in motion. Mr. Jeffrey is far from a flowery or affected writer; he has few tropes or figures, still less any odd startling thoughts or quaint innovations in expression; but he has a constant supply of ingenious solutions and pertinent examples. He never proses, never grows dull, never wears an argument to tatters, and by the number, the liveliness and facility of his transitions keeps up that appearance of vivacity, of novel and sparkling effect, for which others are too often indebted to singularity of combination or tinsel ornaments. . . .

Mr. Jeffrey's conversation is equally lively, various, and instructive. There is no subject on which he is not *au fait:* no company in which he is not ready to scatter his pearls for sport. Whether it be politics, or poetry, or science, or anecdote, or wit, or raillery, he takes up his cue without effort, without preparation, and appears equally incapable of tiring himself or his hearers. His only difficulty seems to be, not to speak, but to be silent. There is a constitutional buoyancy and elasticity of mind about him that cannot subside into repose, much less sink into dulness. There may be more original talkers, persons who occasionally surprise or interest you more; few, if any, with a more uninterrupted flow of cheerfulness and animal spirits, with a greater fund of information, and with fewer specimens of the *bathos* in their conversation. He is never absurd, nor has he any favourite points which he is always bringing forward. It cannot be denied that there is something bordering on petulance of manner; but it is of that least offensive kind which may be accounted for from merit and from success, and implies no exclusive pretensions nor the least particle of ill-will to others. On the contrary, Mr. Jeffrey is profuse of his encomiums and admiration of others, but still with a certain reservation of a right to differ or to blame. He cannot rest on one side of a question; he is obliged by

a mercurial habit and disposition to vary his point of view. If he is ever tedious, it is from an excess of liveliness: he oppresses from a sense of airy lightness. He is always setting out on a fresh scent: there are always *relays* of topics; the harness is put to, and he rattles away as delightfully and as briskly as ever. New causes are called; he holds a brief in his hand for every possible question. This is a fault. Mr. Jeffrey is not obtrusive, is not impatient of opposition, is not unwilling to be interrupted; but what is said by another seems to make no impression on him; he is bound to dispute, to answer it, as if he was in court, or as if it were in a paltry Debating Society, where young beginners were trying their hands. This is not to maintain a character, or for want of good-nature: it is a thoughtless habit. He cannot help cross-examining a witness, or stating the adverse view of the question. He listens not to judge, but to reply. In consequence of this, you can as little tell the impression your observations make on him as what weight to assign to his. . . .

The severest of critics (as he has been sometimes termed) is the best-natured of men. Whatever there may be of wavering or indecision, in Mr. Jeffrey's reasoning, or of harshness in his critical decisions, in his disposition there is nothing but simplicity and kindness. He is a person that no one knows without esteeming, and who both in his public connections and private friendships shows the same manly uprightness and unbiassed independence of spirit. At a distance, in his writings or even in his manner, there may be something to excite a little uneasiness and apprehension: in his conduct there is nothing to except against. He is a person of strict integrity himself, without pretence or affectation, and knows how to respect this quality in others without prudery or intolerance. He can censure a friend or a stranger, and serve him effectually at the same time. He expresses his disapprobation, but not as an excuse for closing up the avenues of his liberality. He is a Scotchman without one particle of hypocrisy, of cant, of servility, or selfishness in his composition. He has not been spoiled by fortune—has not been tempted by power—is firm without violence, friendly without weakness—a critic and even-tempered, a casuist and an honest man —and, amidst the toils of his profession and the distractions of the world, retains the gaiety, the unpretending carelessness and simplicity, of youth. Mr. Jeffrey in his person is slight, with a countenance of much expression and a voice of great flexibility and acuteness of tone.

WILLIAM COBBETT.

People have about as substantial an idea of Cobbett as they have of Cribb. His blows are as hard, and he himself is as impenetrable. One has no notion of him as making use of a fine pen, but a great mutton-fist; his style stuns his readers, and he "filips the ear of the public with a three-man beetle." He is too much for any single newspaper antagonist, "lays waste" a city orator or Member of Parliament, and bears hard upon the Government itself. He is a kind of *fourth estate* in the politics of the country.

He is not only unquestionably the most powerful political writer of the present day, but one of the best writers in the language. He speaks and thinks plain, broad, downright English. He might be said to have the clearness of Swift, the naturalness of Defoe, and the picturesque satirical description of Mandeville: if all such comparisons were not impertinent. A really great and original writer is like nobody but himself. In one sense, Sterne was not a wit, nor Shakspeare a poet. It is easy to describe second-rate talents, because they fall into a class and enlist under a standard; but first-rate powers defy calculation or comparison, and can be defined only by themselves. They are *sui generis*, and make the class to which they belong. I have tried half a dozen times to describe Burke's style without ever succeeding: its severe extravagance, its literal boldness, its matter-of-fact hyperboles, its running away with a subject and from it at the same time; but there is no making it out, for there is no example of the same thing anywhere else. We have no common measure to refer to; and his qualities contradict even themselves.

Cobbett is not so difficult. He has been compared to Paine; and so far it is true there are no two writers who come more into juxtaposition from the nature of their subjects, from the internal resources on which they draw, and from the popular effect of their writings and their adaptation (though that is a bad word in the present case) to the capacity of every reader. But still, if we turn to a volume of Paine's (his "Common Sense" or "Rights of Man") we are struck (not to say somewhat refreshed) by the difference. Paine is a much more sententious writer than Cobbett. You cannot open a page in any of his best and earlier works without meeting with some maxim, some antithetical and memorable saying, which is a sort of starting-place for the argument, and the goal to which it returns.

There is not a single *bon-mot*, a single sentence in Cobbett that

has ever been quoted again. If anything is ever quoted from him, it is an epithet of abuse or a nickname. He is an excellent hand at invention in that way, and has "damnable iteration in him." What could be better than his pestering Erskine year after year with his second title of Baron Clackmannan? He is rather too fond of such phrases as *the Sons and Daughters of Corruption*. Paine affected to reduce things to first principles, to announce self-evident truths. Cobbett troubles himself about little but the details and local circumstances. The first appeared to have made up his mind beforehand to certain opinions, and to try to find the most compendious and pointed expressions for them: his successor appears to have no clue, no fixed or leading principles, nor ever to have thought on a question till he sits down to write about it. But then there seems no end of his matters of fact and raw materials, which are brought out in all their strength and sharpness from not having been squared or frittered down or vamped up to suit a theory. He goes on with his descriptions and illustrations as if he would never come to a stop; they have all the force of novelty, with all the familiarity of old acquaintance. His knowledge grows out of the subject; and his style is that of a man who has an absolute intuition of what he is talking about, and never thinks of anything else. He deals in premises and speaks to evidence: the coming to a conclusion and summing up (which was Paine's *forte*) lies in a smaller compass. The one could not compose an elementary treatise on politics to become a manual for the popular reader; nor could the other, in all probability, have kept up a weekly journal for the same number of years with the same spirit, interest, and untired perseverance. Paine's writings are a sort of introduction to political arithmetic on a new plan; Cobbett keeps a day-book, and makes an entry at full of all the occurrences and troublesome questions that start up throughout the year.

Cobbett, with vast industry, vast information, and the utmost power of making what he says intelligible, never seems to get at the beginning or come to the end of any question; Paine in a few short sentences seems by his peremptory manner "to clear it from all controversy, past, present, and to come." Paine takes a bird's-eye view of things; Cobbett sticks close to them, inspects the component parts, and keeps fast hold of the smallest advantages they afford him. Or, if I might here be indulged in a pastoral allusion, Paine tries to enclose his ideas in a fold for security and repose; Cobbett lets *his* pour out upon the plain like a flock of sheep to feed and batten. Cobbett is a pleasanter writer for those to read who do not agree with him; for he is less dogmatical, goes more into the common grounds of fact and argument to which all appeal, is more desultory

and various, and appears less to be driving at a previous conclusion than urged on by the force of present conviction. He is therefore tolerated by all parties, though he has made himself by turns obnoxious to all; and even those he abuses read him. The Reformers read him when he was a Tory, and the Tories read him now that he is a Reformer. He must, I think, however, be *caviare* to the Whigs. Lord Chancellor Thurlow used to say that Cobbett was the only writer that deserved the name of a political reasoner.

If he is less metaphysical and poetical than his celebrated prototype, he is more picturesque and dramatic. His episodes, which are numerous as they are pertinent, are striking, interesting, full of life and *naïveté*, minute, double measure running over, but never tedious —*nunquam sufflaminandus erat.* He is one of those writers who can never tire us, not even of himself; and the reason is, he is always "full of matter." He never runs to lees, never gives us the vapid leavings of himself, is never "weary, stale, and unprofitable," but always setting out afresh on his journey, clearing away some old nuisance, and turning up new mould. His egotism is delightful, for there is no affectation in it. He does not talk of himself for lack of something to write about, but because some circumstance that has happened to himself is the best possible illustration of the subject; and he is not the man to shrink from giving the best possible illustration of the subject from a squeamish delicacy. He likes both himself and his subject too well. He does not put himself before it, and say "Admire me first," but places us in the same situation with himself, and makes us see all that he does. There is no blind-man's buff, no conscious hints, no awkward ventriloquism, no testimonies of applause, no abstract, senseless self-complacency, no smuggled admiration of his own person by proxy. It is all plain and above-board.

He writes himself plain William Cobbett, strips himself quite as naked as anybody could wish: in a word, his egotism is full of individuality, and has room for very little vanity in it. We feel delighted, rub our hands, and draw our chair to the fire when we come to a passage of this sort: we know it will be something new and good, manly and simple, not the same insipid story of self over again. We sit down at table with the writer, but it is of a course of rich viands—flesh, fish, and wild fowl—and not to a nominal entertainment, like that given by the Barmecide in the "Arabian Nights," who put off his visitor with calling for a number of exquisite things that never appeared, and with the honour of his company. Mr. Cobbett is not a *make-believe* writer. His worst enemy cannot say that of him. Still less is he a vulgar one. He must be a puny

commonplace critic indeed who thinks him so. How fine were the graphical descriptions he sent us from America! what a transatlantic flavour, what a native *gusto*, what a fine *sauce piquante* of contempt they were seasoned with! If he had sat down to look at himself in the glass, instead of looking about him like Adam in Paradise, he would not have got up these articles in so capital a style. What a noble account of his first breakfast after his arrival in America! It might serve for a month. There is no scene on the stage more amusing.

How well he paints the gold and scarlet plumage of the American birds, only to lament more pathetically the want of the wild wood-notes of his native land! The groves of the Ohio, that had just fallen beneath the axe's stroke, "live in his description," and the turnips that he transplanted from Botley "look green" in prose! How well, at another time, he describes the poor sheep that had got the tick, and had tumbled down in the agonies of death! It is a portrait in the manner of Bewick, with the strength, the simplicity, and feeling of that great naturalist. What havoc he makes, when he pleases, of the curls of Dr. Parr's wig, and of the Whig consistency of Mr. ——! His Grammar, too, is as entertaining as a story-book. He is too hard, however, upon the style of others, and not enough (sometimes) on his own.

As a political partisan, no one can stand against him. With his brandished club, like Giant Despair in the "Pilgrim's Progress," he knocks out their brains: and not only no individual, but no corrupt system, could hold out against his powerful and repeated attacks. But with the same weapon swung round like a flail, with which he levels his antagonists, he lays his friends low, and puts his own party *hors de combat*. This is a bad propensity and a worse principle in political tactics, though a common one. If his blows were straightforward and steadily directed to the same object, no unpopular Minister could live before him; instead of which he lays about right and left impartially and remorselessly, makes a clear stage, has all the ring to himself, and then runs out of it, just when he should stand his ground. He throws his head into his adversary's stomach, and takes away from him all inclination for the fight, hits fair or foul, strikes at everything, and as you come up to his aid or stand ready to pursue his advantage, trips up your heels or lays you sprawling, and pummels you when down as much to his heart's content as ever the Yanguesian carriers belaboured Rosinante with their pack-staves. "*He has the back-trick simply the best of any man in Illyria.*"

He pays off both scores of old friendship and new-acquired enmity in a breath, in one perpetual volley, one raking fire of "arrowy sleet."

shot from his pen. However his own reputation or the cause may suffer in consequence, he cares not one pin about that, so that he disables all who oppose or who pretend to help him. In fact, he cannot bear success of any kind, not even of his own views or party; and if any principle were likely to become popular, would turn round against it, to show his power in shouldering it on one side. In short, wherever power is, there is he against it: he naturally butts at all obstacles, as unicorns are attracted to oak-trees, and feels his own strength only by resistance to the opinions and wishes of the rest of the world. To sail with the stream, to agree with the company, is not his humour. If he could bring about a Reform in Parliament, the odds are that he would instantly fall foul of and try to mar his own handiwork; and he quarrels with his own creatures as soon as he has written them into a little vogue—and a prison. I do not think this is vanity or fickleness so much as a pugnacious disposition, that must have an antagonist power to contend with, and only finds itself at ease in systematic opposition. If it were not for this, the high towers and rotten places of the world would fall before the battering-ram of his hard-headed reasoning: but if he once found them tottering, he would apply his strength to prop them up, and disappoint the expectations of his followers. He cannot agree to anything established, nor to set up anything else in its stead. While it is established, he presses hard against it, because it presses upon him, at least in imagination. Let it crumble under his grasp, and the motive to resistance is gone. He then requires some other grievance to set his face against.

His principle is repulsion, his nature contradiction: he is made up of mere antipathies; an Ishmaelite indeed without a fellow. He is always playing at *hunt-the-slipper* in politics. He turns round upon whoever is next to him. The way to wean him from any opinion, and make him conceive an intolerable hatred against it, would be to place somebody near him who was perpetually dinning it in his ears. When he is in England, he does nothing but abuse the Boroughmongers, and laugh at the whole system: when he is in America, he grows impatient of freedom and a republic. If he had stayed there a little longer, he would have become a loyal and a loving subject of His Majesty King George IV. He lampooned the French Revolution when it was hailed as the dawn of liberty by millions; by the time it was brought into almost universal ill-odour by some means or other (partly no doubt by himself), he had turned, with one or two or three others, staunch Bonapartist. He is always of the militant, not of the triumphant party: so far he bears a gallant show of magnanimity. But his gallantry is hardly of the right

stamp: it wants principle. For though he is not servile or mercenary, he is the victim of self-will. He must pull down and pull in pieces: it is not in his disposition to do otherwise. It is a pity; for with his great talents he might do great things, if he would go right forward to any useful object, make thorough-stitch work of any question, or join hand and heart with any principle. He changes his opinions as he does his friends, and much on the same account. He has no comfort in fixed principles: as soon as anything is settled in his own mind, he quarrels with it. He has no satisfaction but in the chase after truth, runs a question down, worries and kills it, then quits it like vermin, and starts some new game, to lead him a new dance, and give him a fresh breathing through bog and brake, with the rabble yelping at his heels and the leaders perpetually at fault.

This he calls sport-royal. He thinks it as good as cudgel-playing or single-stick, or anything else that has life in it. He likes the cut and thrust, the falls, bruises, and dry blows of an argument: as to any good or useful results that may come of the amicable settling of it, any one is welcome to them for him. The amusement is over when the matter is once fairly decided.

There is another point of view in which this may be put. I might say that Mr. Cobbett is a very honest man with a total want of principle; and I might explain this paradox thus. I mean that he is, I think, in downright earnest in what he says, in the part he takes at the time; but, in taking that part, he is led entirely by headstrong obstinacy, caprice, novelty, pique, or personal motive of some sort, and not by a steadfast regard for truth or habitual anxiety for what is right uppermost in his mind. He is not a feed, time-serving, shuffling advocate (no man could write as he does who did not believe himself sincere); but his understanding is the dupe and slave of his momentary, violent and irritable humours. He does not adopt an opinion "deliberately or for money;" yet his conscience is at the mercy of the first provocation he receives, of the first whim he takes in his head. He sees things through the medium of heat and passion, not with reference to any general principles; and his whole system of thinking is deranged by the first object that strikes his fancy or sours his temper.

One cause of this phenomenon is perhaps his want of a regular education. He is a self-taught man, and has the faults as well as excellences of that class of persons in their most striking and glaring excess. It must be acknowledged that the Editor of the *Political Register* (the *twopenny trash*, as it was called, till a Bill passed the House to raise the price to sixpence) is not "the gentleman and

scholar," though he has qualities that, with a little better management, would be worth (to the public) both those titles. For want of knowing what has been discovered before him, he has not certain general landmarks to refer to or a general standard of thought to apply to individual cases. He relies on his own acuteness and the immediate evidence, without being acquainted with the comparative anatomy or philosophical structure of opinion. He does not view things on a large scale or at the horizon (dim and airy enough perhaps); but as they affect himself—close, palpable, tangible. Whatever he finds out is his own, and he only knows what he finds out. He is in the constant hurry and fever of gestation: his brain teems incessantly with some fresh project. Every new light is the birth of a new system, the dawn of a new world to him. He is continually outstripping and overreaching himself. The last opinion is the only true one. He is wiser to-day than he was yesterday? Why should he not be wiser to-morrow than he was to-day?

Men of a learned education are not so sharp-witted as clever men without it; but they know the balance of the human intellect better. If they are more stupid, they are more steady, and are less liable to be led astray by their own sagacity and the overweening petulance of hard-earned and late-acquired wisdom. They do not fall in love with every meretricious extravagance at first sight, or mistake an old battered hypothesis for a vestal, because they are new to the ways of this old world. They do not seize upon it as a prize, but are safe from gross imposition by being as wise and no wiser than those who went before them.

Paine said on some occasion, "What I have written, I have written," as rendering any further declaration of his principles unnecessary. Not so Mr. Cobbett. What he has written is no rule to him what he is to write. He learns something every day, and every week he takes the field to maintain the opinions of the last six days against friend or foe. I doubt whether this outrageous inconsistency, this headstrong fickleness, this understood want of all rule and method, does not enable him to go on with the spirit, vigour, and variety that he does. He is not pledged to repeat himself. Every new *Register* is a kind of new Prospectus. He blesses himself from all ties and shackles on his understanding; he has no mortgages on his brain; his notions are free and unencumbered. If he was put in trammels, he might become a vile hack like so many more. But he gives himself "ample scope and verge enough." He takes both sides of a question, and maintains one as sturdily as the other. If nobody else can argue against him, he is a very good match for himself. He writes better in favour of reform than anybody else; he

used to write better against it. Wherever he is, there is the tug of war, the weight of the argument, the strength of abuse.

He is not like a man in danger of being *bed-rid* in his faculties: he tosses and tumbles about his unwieldy bulk, and when he is tired of lying on one side, relieves himself by turning on the other. His shifting his point of view from time to time not merely adds variety and greater compass to his topics (so that the *Political Register* is an armoury and magazine for all the materials and weapons of political warfare): but it gives a greater zest and liveliness to his manner of treating them. Mr. Cobbett takes nothing for granted, as what he has proved before; he does not write a book of reference. We see his ideas in their first concoction, fermenting and overflowing with the ebullitions of a lively conception. We look on at the actual process, and are put in immediate possession of the grounds and materials on which he forms his sanguine, unsettled conclusions. He does not give us samples of reasoning, but the whole solid mass, refuse and all.

> "He pours out all as plain
> As downright Shippen or as old Montaigne."

This is one cause of the clearness and force of his writings. An argument does not stop to stagnate and muddle in his brain, but passes at once to his paper. His ideas are served up, like pancakes, hot and hot.

Fresh theories give him fresh courage. He is like a young and lusty bridegroom, that divorces a favourite speculation every morning, and marries a new one every night. He is not wedded to his notions, not he. He has not one Mrs. Cobbett among all his opinions. He makes the most of the last thought that has come in his way, seizes fast hold of it, rumples it about in all directions with rough strong hands, has his wicked will of it, takes a surfeit, and throws it away. Our author's changing his opinions for new ones is not so wonderful; what is more remarkable is his felicity in forgetting his old ones. He does not pretend to consistency (like Mr. Coleridge); he frankly disavows all connection with himself. He feels no personal responsibility in this way, and cuts a friend or principle with the same decided indifference that Antipholis of Ephesus cuts Ægeon of Syracuse. It is a hollow thing. The only time he ever grew romantic was in bringing over the relics of Mr. Thomas Paine with him from America, to go a progress with them through the disaffected districts. Scarce had he landed in Liverpool, when he left the bones of a great man to shift for themselves; and no sooner did he arrive in London, than he made a speech to disclaim all participation in the political and theological sentiments of his late

idol, and to place the whole stock of his admiration and enthusiasm towards him to the account of his financial speculations, and of his having predicted the fate of paper-money.

If he had erected a little gold statue to him, it might have proved the sincerity of this assertion; but to make a martyr and a patron-saint of a man, and to dig up "his canonised bones" in order to expose them as objects of devotion to the rabble's gaze, asks something that has more life and spirit in it, more mind and vivifying soul, than has to do with any calculation of pounds, shillings, and pence! The fact is, he *ratted* from his own project. He found the thing not so ripe as he had expected. His heart failed him; his enthusiasm fled; and he made his retraction. His admiration is short-lived: his contempt only is rooted, and his resentment lasting. The above was only one instance of his building too much on practical *data*. He has an ill habit of prophesying, and goes on, though still deceived. The art of prophesying does not suit Mr. Cobbett's style. He has a knack of fixing names and times and places. According to him, the Reformed Parliament was to meet in March 1818; it did not, and we heard no more of the matter. When his predictions fail, he takes no further notice of them, but applies himself to new ones, like the country-people, who turn to see what weather there is in the almanac for the next week, though it has been out in its reckoning every day of the last.

Mr. Cobbett is great in attack, not in defence: he cannot fight an uphill battle. He will not bear the least punishing. If any one turns upon him (which few people like to do), he immediately turns tail. Like an overgrown schoolboy, he is so used to have it all his own way, that he cannot submit to anything like competition or a struggle for the mastery: he must lay on all the blows, and take none. He is bullying and cowardly; a Big Ben in politics, who will fall upon others and crush them by his weight, but is not prepared for resistance, and is soon staggered by a few smart blows. Whenever he has been set upon, he has slunk out of the controversy. . . .

Mr. Cobbett speaks almost as well as he writes. The only time I ever saw him he seemed to me a very pleasant man: easy of access, affable, clear-headed, simple and mild in his manner, deliberate and unruffled in his speech, though some of his expressions were not very qualified. His figure is tall and portly: he has a good, sensible face, rather full, with little grey eyes, a hard, square forehead, a ruddy complexion, with hair grey or powdered: and had on a scarlet broadcloth waistcoat, with the flaps of the pockets hanging down, as was the custom for gentlemen farmers in the last century, or as

we see it in the pictures of Members of Parliament in the reign of George I. I certainly did not think less favourably of him for seeing him.

CHARLES LAMB.

. . . Mr. Lamb does not march boldly along with the crowd, but steals off the pavement to pick his way in the contrary direction. He prefers *byways* to *highways*. When the full tide of human life pours along to some festive show, to some pageant of a day, Elia would stand on one side to look over an old book-stall, or stroll down some deserted pathway in search of a pensive description over a tottering doorway, or some quaint device in architecture, illustrative of embryo art and ancient manners. Mr. Lamb has the very soul of an antiquarian, as this implies a reflecting humanity; the film of the past hovers for ever before him. He is shy, sensitive, the reverse of everything coarse, vulgar, obtrusive, and *commonplace*. He would fain "shuffle off this mortal coil;" and his spirit clothes itself in the garb of elder time, homelier, but more durable. He is borne along with no pompous paradoxes, shines in no glittering tinsel of a fashionable phraseology, is neither fop nor sophist. He has none of the turbulence or froth of new-fangled opinions. His style runs pure and clear, though it may often take an underground course, or be conveyed through old-fashioned conduit-pipes. Mr. Lamb does not court popularity, nor strut in gaudy plumes, but shrinks from every kind of ostentatious and obvious pretension into the retirement of his own mind. . . .

Mr. Lamb rather affects and is tenacious of the obscure and remote, of that which rests on its own intrinsic and silent merit; which scorns all alliance or even the suspicion of owing anything to noisy clamour, to the glare of circumstances. There is a fine tone of *chiaro-scuro*, a moral perspective in his writings. He delights to dwell on that which is fresh to the eye of memory; he yearns after and covets what soothes the frailty of human nature. That touches him most nearly which is withdrawn to a certain distance, which verges on the borders of oblivion; that piques and provokes his fancy most which is hid from a superficial glance. That which, though gone by, is still remembered, is in his view more genuine, and has given more "vital signs that it will live," than a thing of yesterday, that may be forgotten to-morrow. Death has in this sense the spirit of life in it; and the shadowy has to our author something substantial in it. Ideas savour most of reality in his mind; or rather his imagination loiters on the edge of each, and a

page of his writings recalls to our fancy the *stranger* on the grate, fluttering in its dusky tenuity, with its idle superstition and hospitable welcome!

Mr. Lamb has a distaste to new faces, to new books, to new buildings, to new customs. He is shy of all imposing appearances, of all assumptions of self-importance, of all adventitious ornaments, of all mechanical advantages, even to a nervous excess. It is not merely that he does not rely upon or ordinarily avail himself of them; he holds them in abhorrence; he utterly abjures and discards them, and places a great gulf between him and them. He disdains all the vulgar artifices of authorship, all the cant of criticism and helps to notoriety. He has no grand swelling theories to attract the visionary and the enthusiast, no passing topics to allure the thoughtless and the vain. He evades the present; he mocks the future. His affections revert to and settle on the past; but then even this must have something personal and local in it to interest him deeply and thoroughly. He pitches his tent in the suburbs of existing manners, brings down the account of character to the few straggling remains of the last generation, seldom ventures beyond the bills of mortality, and occupies that nice point between egotism and disinterested humanity. No one makes the tour of our southern metropolis, or describes the manners of the last age, so well as Mr. Lamb; with so fine and yet so formal an air; with such vivid obscurity; with such arch piquancy, such picturesque quaintness, such smiling pathos.

How admirably he has sketched the former inmates of the South Sea House; what "fine fretwork he makes of their double and single entries!" With what a firm yet subtle pencil he has embodied "Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist!" How notably he embalms a battered *beau;* how delightfully an amour, that was cold forty years ago, revives in his pages! With what well-disguised humour he introduces us to his relations, and how freely he serves up his friends! Certainly, some of his portraits are *fixtures,* and will do to hang up as lasting and lively emblems of human infirmity. Then there is no one who has so sure an ear for "the chimes at midnight," not even excepting Mr. Justice Shallow; nor could Master Silence himself take his "cheese and pippins" with a more significant and satisfactory air. With what a gusto Mr. Lamb describes the Inns and Courts of law, the Temple and Gray's Inn, as if he had been a student there for the last two hundred years, and had been as well acquainted with the person of Sir Francis Bacon as he is with his portrait or writings! It is hard to say whether St. John's Gate is connected with more intense and authen-

tic associations in his mind, as a part of old London Wall, or as the frontispiece (time out of mind) of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. He haunts Watling Street like a gentle spirit; the avenues to the play-houses are thick with panting recollections; and Christ's Hospital still breathes the balmy breath of infancy in his description of it! Whittington and his Cat are a fine hallucination for Mr. Lamb's historic Muse, and we believe he never heartily forgave a certain writer who took the subject of Guy Faux out of his hands. The streets of London are his fairyland, teeming with wonder, with life and interest to his retrospective glance, as it did to the eager eye of childhood; he has contrived to weave its tritest traditions into a bright and endless romance!

Mr. Lamb's taste in books is also fine; and it is peculiar. It is not the worse for a little *idiosyncrasy*. He does not go deep into the Scotch Novels; but he is at home in Smollett or Fielding. He is little read in Junius or Gibbon; but no man can give a better account of Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy," or Sir Thomas Browne's "Urn-Burial," or Fuller's "Worthies," or John Bunyan's "Holy War." No one is more unimpressible to a specious declamation; no one relishes a recondite beauty more. His admiration of Shakspeare and Milton does not make him despise Pope; and he can read Parnell with patience and Gay with delight. His taste in French and German literature is somewhat defective; nor has he made much progress in the science of Political Economy or other abstruse studies, though he has read vast folios of controversial divinity, merely for the sake of the intricacy of style, and to save himself the pain of thinking.

Mr. Lamb is a good judge of prints and pictures. His admiration of Hogarth does credit to both, particularly when it is considered that Leonardo da Vinci is his next greatest favourite, and that his love of the *actual* does not proceed from a want of taste for the *ideal*. His worst fault is an over-eagerness of enthusiasm, which occasionally makes him take a surfeit of his highest favourites. Mr. Lamb excels in familiar conversation almost as much as in writing, when his modesty does not overpower his self-possession. He is as little of a proser as possible; but he *blurts* out the finest wit and sense in the world. He keeps a good deal in the background at first, till some excellent conceit pushes him forward, and then he abounds in whim and pleasantry. There is a primitive simplicity and self-denial about his manners and a Quakerism in his personal appearance, which is, however, relieved by a fine Titian head, full of dumb eloquence!

Mr. Lamb is a general favourite with those who know him. His character is equally singular and amiable. He is endeared to his

friends not less by his foibles than his virtues: he ensures their esteem by the one, and does not wound their self-love by the other. He gains ground in the opinion of others by making no advances in his own. We easily admire genius where the diffidence of the possessor makes our acknowledgment of merit seem like a sort of patronage or act of condescension, as we willingly extend our good offices where they are not exacted as obligations or repaid with sullen indifference.

The style of the Essays of Elia is liable to the charge of a certain *mannerism*. His sentences are cast in the mould of old authors; his expressions are borrowed from them; but his feelings and observations are genuine and original, taken from actual life or from his own breast; and he may be said (if any one can) "to have coined his heart for *jests*," and to have split his brain for fine distinctions! Mr. Lamb, from the peculiarity of his exterior and address as an author, would probably never have made his way by detached and independent efforts; but, fortunately for himself and others, he has taken advantage of the Periodical Press, where he has been stuck into notice; and the texture of his compositions is assuredly fine enough to bear the broadest glare of popularity that has hitherto shone upon them. Mr. Lamb's literary efforts have procured him civic honours (a thing unheard of in our times), and he has been invited, in his character of Elia, to dine at a select party with the Lord Mayor. We should prefer this distinction to that of being poet-laureate. We would recommend to Mr. Waithman's perusal (if Mr. Lamb has not anticipated us) the "Rosamond Gray" and the "John Woodvil" of the same author, as an agreeable relief to the noise of a City feast and the heat of City elections.

A friend, a short time ago, quoted some lines from the last-mentioned of these works, which meeting Mr. Godwin's eye, he was so struck with the beauty of the passage, and with a consciousness of having seen it before, that he was uneasy till he could recollect where, and after hunting in vain for it in Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and other not unlikely places, sent to Mr. Lamb to know if he could help him to the author!

LEIGH HUNT.

We should descant at greater length on the merits of Leigh Hunt, but that personal intimacy might be supposed to render us partial. It is well when personal intimacy produces this effect; and when the light, that dazzled us at a distance, does not on a closer inspection

turn out an opaque substance. This is a charge that none of his friends will bring against Mr. Leigh Hunt. He improves upon acquaintance. The author translates admirably into the man. Indeed, the very faults of his style are virtues in the individual. His natural gaiety and sprightliness of manner, his high animal spirits, and the *vinous* quality of his mind produce an immediate fascination and intoxication in those who come in contact with him, and carry off in society whatever in his writings may to some seem flat and impertinent. From great sanguineness of temper, from great quickness and unsuspecting simplicity, he runs on to the public as he does at his own fireside, and talks about himself, forgetting that he is not always among friends. His look, his tone are required to point many things that he says: his frank, cordial manner reconciles you instantly to a little overbearing, overweening self-complacency. "To be admired, he needs but to be seen:" but perhaps he ought to be seen to be fully appreciated. No one ever sought his society who did not come away with a more favourable opinion of him: no one was ever disappointed, except those who had entertained idle prejudices against him. He sometimes trifles with his readers, or tires of a subject (from not being urged on by the stimulus of immediate sympathy); but in conversation he is all life and animation, combining the vivacity of the schoolboy with the resources of the wit and the taste of the scholar. The personal character, the spontaneous impulses, do not appear to excuse the author, unless you are acquainted with his situation and habits: like some great beauty who gives herself what we think strange airs and graces under a mask, but who is instantly forgiven when she shows her face.

We have said that Lord Byron is a sublime coxcomb: why should we not say that Mr. Hunt is a delightful one? There is certainly an exuberance of satisfaction in his manner which is more than the strict logical premises warrant, and which dull and phlegmatic constitutions know nothing of, and cannot understand till they see it. He is the only poet or literary man we ever knew who puts us in mind of Sir John Suckling or Killigrew, or Carew; or who united rare intellectual acquirements with outward grace and natural gentility. Mr. Hunt ought to have been a gentleman born, and to have patronised men of letters. He might then have played, and sung, and laughed, and talked his life away; have written manly prose, elegant verse: and his "Story of Rimini" would have been praised by Mr. Blackwood. As it is, there is no man now living who at the same time writes prose and verse so well, with the exception of Mr. Southey (an exception, we fear, that will be little palatable to either of these gentlemen). His prose-writings, how-

ever, display more consistency of principle than the Laureate's, his verses more taste. We will venture to oppose his Third Canto of the "Story of Rimini" for classic elegance and natural feeling to any equal number of lines from Mr. Southey's Epics or from Mr. Moore's "Lalla Rookh." In a more gay and conversational style of writing, we think his "Epistle to Lord Byron" on his going abroad is a masterpiece; and the "Feast of the Poets," has run through several editions. A light familiar grace and mild unpretending pathos are the characteristics of his more sportive or serious writings, whether in poetry or prose. A smile plays round the sparkling features of the one; a tear is ready to start from the thoughtful gaze of the other. He perhaps takes too little pains, and indulges in too much wayward caprice in both.

A wit and a poet, Mr. Hunt is also distinguished by fineness of tact and sterling sense: he has only been a visionary in humanity, the fool of virtue. What, then, is the drawback to so many shining qualities, that has made them useless, or even hurtful to their owner? His crime is, to have been Editor of the *Examiner* ten years ago, when some allusion was made in it to the age of the present King; * and though His Majesty has grown older, our luckless politician is no wiser than he was then!

[*Notes of a Journey through France and Italy*, 1826. These notes first appeared in the columns of *The Morning Chronicle*. The volume has never been reprinted.]

THE LOUVRE.

The first thing I did when I got to Paris was to go to the Louvre. It was indeed "first and last and midst" in my thoughts. Well might it be so, for it had never been absent from them for twenty years. I had gazed myself almost blind in looking at the precious works of art it then contained—should I not weep myself blind in looking at them again, after a lapse of half a life—or on finding them gone, and with them gone all that I had once believed and hoped of human-kind. . . . Thou sacred shrine of god-like magnificence, must not my heart fail and my feet stumble as I approach thee! How gladly would I kneel down and kiss thy threshold, and crawl into thy presence, like an Eastern slave! For here still linger the broken remains and the faded splendour of that proud monument of the triumphs of art and of the majesty of man's nature over

* Hunt described him (he was then Prince Regent) as "an Adonis of fifty."

the mock-majesty of thrones! Here Genius and Fame dwell together; "*School* calleth unto *School*," and mighty names answer to each other; that old gallery points to the long, dim perspective of waning years, and the shadow of Glory and of Liberty is seen afar off. In pacing its echoing floors, I hear the sound of the footsteps of my youth, and the dead start from their slumbers! . . . In all the time that I had been away from thee, and amidst all the changes that had happened in it, did I ever forget, did I ever profane thee? Never for a moment or in thought have I swerved from thee, or from the cause of which thou wert the pledge and crown. Often have I sought thee in sleep, and cried myself awake to find thee, with the heartfelt yearnings of intolerable affection. Still didst thou haunt me, like a passionate dream—like some proud beauty, the queen and mistress of my thoughts. Neither pain nor sickness could wean me from thee—

"My theme in crowds, my solitary pride."

In the tangled forest or the barren waste—in the lowly hovel or the lofty palace, thy roofs reared their vaulted canopy over my head, a loftier palace, an ampler space—a "brave o'erhanging firmament," studded with constellations of art. Wherever I was, thou wert with me, above me and about me; and didst "hang upon the beatings of my heart," a vision and a joy unutterable. There was one chamber of the brain (at least) which I had only to unlock and be master of boundless wealth—a treasure-house of pure thoughts and cherished recollections. Tyranny could not master, barbarism slunk from it; vice could not pollute, folly could not gainsay it. I had but to touch a certain spring, and lo! on the walls the divine grace of Guido appeared free from blemish—there were the golden hues of Titian, and Raphael's speaking faces, the splendour of Rubens, the gorgeous gloom of Rembrandt, the airy elegance of Vandyke, and Claude's classic scenes lapped the senses in Elysium, and Poussin breathed the spirit of antiquity over them. There, in that fine old lumber-room of the imagination, were the "Transfiguration," and the "St. Peter Martyr," with its majestic figures and its unrivalled landscape background. There also were the two "St. Jeromes," "Domenichino's and Correggio's"—there "stood the statue that enchants the world"—there were the "Apollo" and the "Antinous," the "Laocoon," the "Dying Gladiator," "Diana and her Fawn," and all the glories of the antique world—

"There was old Proteus coming from the sea,
And aged Triton blew his wreathed horn."

. . . Instead of the old Republican doorkeepers, with their rough

voices and affectation of equality, a servant in a Court-livery stood at the gate. On presenting myself, I inquired if a Monsieur Livernois (who had formerly ushered me into this region of enchantment) were still there; but he was gone or dead. My hesitation and foreign accent, with certain other appeals, procured me admittance. I passed on without further question. I cast a glance forward, and found that the Poussins were there. At the sight of the first, which I distinctly recollected (a fine green landscape, with stately ruins), the tears came into my eyes, and I passed an hour or two in that state of luxurious enjoyment which is the highest privilege of the mind of man, and which perhaps makes him amends for many sorrows. To my surprise, instead of finding the whole changed, I found everything nearly in its place, as I proceeded through the first compartments, which I did slowly, and reserving the Italian pictures for a *bon bouche*. The colours even seemed to have been mellowed, and to have grown to the walls in the last twenty years, as if the pictures had been fixed there by the cramping-irons of Victory, instead of hanging loose and fluttering, like so much tattered canvas, at the sound of English drums and breath of Prussian manifestoes. Nothing could be better managed than the way in which they had blended the Claudes and Poussins alternately together—the ethereal refinement and dazzling brilliancy of the one relieving and giving additional zest to the sombre, grave, massive character of the other. Claude Lorraine pours the spirit of air over all objects, and new-creates them of light and sunshine. In several of his masterpieces which are shown here, the vessels, the trees, the temples and middle distances glimmer between air and solid substance, and seem moulded of a new element in Nature. No words can do justice to their softness, their precision, their sparkling effect. But they do not lead the mind out of their own magic circle. They repose on their own beauty; they fascinate with faultless elegance. Poussin's landscapes are more properly pictures of time than of place. They have a fine *moral* perspective, not inferior to Claude's aerial one. They carry the imagination back two or four thousand years at least, and bury it in the remote twilight of history. There is an opaqueness and solemnity in his colouring, assimilating with the tone of long-past events; his buildings are stiff with age; his implements of husbandry are such as would belong to the first rude stages of civilisation; his harvests are such (as in the "Ruth and Boaz") as would yield to no modern sickle; his grapes (as in the "Return from the Promised Land") are a load to modern shoulders; there is a simplicity and undistinguishing breadth in his figures; and over all, the hand of time has drawn its veil. Poussin has his

faults; but, like all truly great men, there is that in him which is to be found nowhere else; and even the excellences of others would be defects in him. One picture of his in particular drew my attention, which I had not seen before. It is an addition to the Louvre, and makes up for many a flaw in it. It is the "Adam and Eve in Paradise," and it is all that Mr. Martin's picture of that subject is not. It is a scene of sweetness and seclusion "to cure all sadness but despair." There is the freshness of the first dawn of creation, immortal verdure, the luxuriant budding growth of unpruned Nature's gifts, the stillness and the privacy, as if there were only those two beings in the world, made for each other, and with this world of beauty for the scene of their delights. It is a heaven descended upon earth, as if the finger of God had planted the garden with trees and fruits and flowers, and His hand had watered it! . . .

ROMAN CATHOLICISM.

The number of pilgrims to Rome, at this season, is diminished from eighty or ninety thousand a century ago, to a few hundreds at present. We passed two on the road, with their staff and scrip and motley attire. I did not look at them with any particle of respect. The impression was, that they were either knaves or fools. The farther they come on this errand, the more you have a right to suspect their motives. Not that I by any means suppose these are always bad—but those who signalise their zeal by such long marches obtain not only absolution for the past, but extraordinary indulgence for the future, so that if a person meditate any baseness or mischief, a pilgrimage to Rome is his high-road to it. The Popish religion is a convenient cloak for crime, an embroidered robe for virtue. It makes the essence of good and ill to depend on rewards and punishments, and places these in the hands of the priests, for the honour of God and the welfare of the Church. Their path to heaven is a kind of gallery directly over the path to hell; or, rather, it is the same road, only that at the end of it you kneel down, lift up your hands and eyes, and say you have gone wrong, and you are admitted into the right-hand gate, instead of the left-hand one. Hell is said, in the strong language of controversial divinity, to be "paved with good intentions." Heaven, according to some fanatical creeds, is "paved with mock-professions." Devotees and proselytes are passed on like wretched paupers, with false certificates of merit, by hypocrites and bigots, who consider submission to their opinions and power as more than equivalent to a conformity to the dictates of reason or the will

of God. . . . Popery is an admirable receipt to reconcile his higher and his lower nature in a beautiful *équivoque* or *double-entendre* of forms and mysteries,—the palpableness of sense with the dim abstractions of faith, the indulgence of passion with the atonement of confession and abject repentance when the fit is over, the debasement of the actual with the elevation of the ideal part of man's nature, the Pagan with the Christian religion; to substitute lip-service, genuflections, adoration of images, counting of beads, repeating of *Aves*, for useful works or pure intentions, and to get rid at once of all moral obligation, of all self-control and self-respect, by the proxy of maudlin superstition, by a slavish submission to priests and saints, by prostrating ourselves before them, and entreating them to take our sins and weaknesses upon them, and supply us with a saving grace (at the expense of a routine of empty forms and words) out of the abundance of their merits and imputed righteousness. This religion suits the pride and weakness of man's intellect, the indolence of his will, the cowardliness of his fears, the vanity of his hopes, his disposition to reap the profits of a good thing and leave the trouble to others, the magnificence of his pretensions with the meanness of his performance, the pampering of his passions, the stifling of his remorse, the making sure of this world and the next, the saving of his soul and the comforting of his body. It is adapted equally to kings and people—to those who love power or dread it—who look up to others as gods, or who would trample them under their feet as reptiles—to the devotees of show and sound, or the visionary and gloomy recluse—to the hypocrite and bigot—to saints or sinners—to fools or knaves—to men, women, and children. In short, its success is owing to this, that it is a mixture of bitter-sweets—that it is a remedy that soothes the disease it affects to cure—that it is not an antidote, but a vent for the peccant humours, the follies and vices of mankind, with a salvo in favour of appearances, a reserve of loftier aspirations (whenever it is convenient to resort to them), and a formal recognition of certain general principles, as a courtesy of speech, or a compromise between the understanding and the passions! *Omne tulit punctum.* There is nothing to be said against it, but that it is contrary to reason and common-sense; and even were they to prevail over it, some other absurdity would start up in its stead, not less mischievous, but less amusing; for man cannot exist long without having scope given to his propensity to the marvellous and contradictory. . . .

[*Conversations of James Northcote, Esq., R.A.*, 1830. These Conversations originally appeared in the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1826–7].

N—— related an anecdote of Mr. Moore (brother of the General), who was on board an English frigate in the American war, and coming in sight of another vessel which did not answer their signals, they expected an action, when the Captain called his men together, and addressed them in the following manner:—"You dirty, ill-looking blackguards! do you suppose I can agree to deliver up such a set of scarecrows as you as prisoners to that smart, frippery Frenchman? I can't think of such a thing. No! by G—d, you must fight till not a man of you is left, for I should be ashamed of owning such a ragamuffin crew!" This was received with loud shouts and assurances of victory, but the vessel turned out to be an English one. . . .

N—— said it was one of Sir Joshua's maxims that the art of life consisted in not being overset by trifles. We should look at the bottom of the account, not at each individual item in it, and see how the balance stands at the end of the year. We should be satisfied if the path of life is clear before us, and not fret at the straws or pebbles that lie in our way. . . .

N. For instance, I liked Sir Walter, because he had an easy, unaffected manner, and was ready to converse on all subjects alike. He was not like your friends, the L—— poets, who talk about nothing but their own poetry. If, on the contrary, he had been stiff and pedantic, I should, perhaps, have been inclined to think less highly of the author from not liking the man; so that we can never judge fairly of men's abilities till we are no longer liable to come in contact with their persons. Friends are as little to be trusted as enemies: favour or prejudice makes the votes in either case more or less suspected; though "the vital signs that a name shall live" are in some instances so strong, that we can hardly refuse to put faith in them, and I think this is one. I was much pleased with Sir Walter, and I believe he expressed a favourable opinion of me. I said to him, "I admire the way in which you begin your novels. You set out so abruptly, that you quite surprise me. I can't at all tell what's coming."—"No!" says Sir Walter, "nor I neither." I then told him, that when I first read "Waverley," I said it was no novel: nobody could invent like that. Either he had heard the story related by one of the surviving parties, or he had found the materials in a manuscript concealed in some old chest: to which he replied, "You're not so far out of the way in thinking so." You don't know him, do you? He'd be a pattern to you. Oh! he has

a very fine manner. You would learn to rub off some of your asperities. But you admire him, I believe.

H. Yes; on this side of idolatry and Toryism.

N. That is your prejudice.

H. Nay, it rather shows my liberality, if I am a devoted enthusiast, notwithstanding. There are two things I admire in Sir Walter, his capacity and his simplicity; which, indeed, I am apt to think are much the same. The more ideas a man has of other things, the less he is taken up with the idea of himself. Every one gives the same account of the author of "Waverley" in this respect. When he was in Paris, and went to Galignani's, he sat down in an outer room to look at some book he wanted to see: none of the clerks had the least suspicion who it was: when it was found out, the place was in a commotion. Cooper, the American, was in Paris at the same time: his looks and manner seemed to announce a much greater man. He strutted through the streets with a very consequential air; and in company held up his head, screwed up his features, and placed himself on a sort of pedestal to be observed and admired, as if he never relaxed in the assumption, nor wished it to be forgotten by others, that he was the American Sir Walter Scott. The real one never troubled himself about the matter. Why should he? . . .

H. Taking one thing with another, I have no great cause to complain. If I had been a merchant, a bookseller, or the proprietor of a newspaper, instead of what I am, I might have had more money or possessed a town and country house, instead of lodging in a first or second floor, as it may happen. But what then? I see how the man of business and fortune passes his time. He is up and in the city by eight, swallows his breakfast in haste, attends a meeting of creditors, must read Lloyd's lists, consult the price of consols, study the markets, look into his accounts, pay his workmen, and superintend his clerks: he has hardly a minute in the day to himself, and perhaps in the four-and-twenty hours does not do a single thing that he would do if he could help it. Surely, this sacrifice of time and inclination requires some compensation, which it meets with. But how am I entitled to make my fortune (which cannot be done without all this anxiety and drudgery) who do hardly anything at all, and never anything but what I like to do? I rise when I please, breakfast *at length*, write what comes into my head, and after taking a mutton-chop and a dish of strong tea, go to the play, and thus my time passes. Mr. —— has no time to go to the play. It was but the other day that I had to get up a little earlier than usual to go into the city about some money transaction, which appeared to me

a prodigious hardship: if so, it was plain that I must lead a tolerably easy life: nor should I object to passing mine over again. Till I was twenty, I had no idea of anything but books, and thought everything else was worthless and mechanical. The having to study painting about this time, and finding the difficulties and beauties it unfolded, opened a new field to me, and I began to conclude that there might be a number of "other things between heaven and earth that were never dreamt of in my philosophy." . . .

[*The Life of Napoleon Buonoparte*, vols. i. and ii., 1828; vols. iii. and iv., 1830. Second Edition, Revised by his Son. 4 vols., 1852.]

[The reader is referred to page xlv. of the Memoir for some opinions regarding this work. Hazlitt was not "the infatuated worshipper of an idol," but the champion of an historical character whom he believed to be unjustly attacked. He has sacrificed no principle to palliate his hero, but has rigorously examined and fearlessly blamed where censure was called for. The following remarks were originally intended to appear as a Preface to the whole work, but for some cause not explained, it was not inserted in its place, but was made to form the opening pages of the third volume.]

PREFACE TO THE LIFE.

Of my object in writing the following Life, and of the general tone that pervades it, it may be proper that I should here render some account, in order to prevent mistakes and false expectations. It is true, I admired the man; but what chiefly attached me to him, was his being, as he had been long ago designated, "the child and champion of Liberty." Of this character he could not divest himself, even though he wished it. He was nothing, he could be nothing but what he owed to himself, and to his triumphs over those who claimed mankind as their property by a divine right; and as long as he was *a thorn in the side of kings*, and kept them at bay, his cause rose out of the ruins and defeat of their pride and hopes of revenge. He stood (and he alone stood) between them and their natural prey. He kept off that last indignity and wrong offered to a whole people (and through them to the world) of being handed over like a herd of cattle to a particular family, and chained to the foot of a legitimate throne. This was the chief point at issue; this was the great question compared with which all others were tame

and insignificant—Whether mankind were from the beginning to the end of time born slaves or not? As long as he remained, his acts, his very existence gave a proud and full answer to this question. As long as he remained a barrier, a gauntlet and an arm of steel between us and them who alone could set up the plea of old, hereditary right over us, no increase of power could be too great that tended to shatter this claim to pieces; even his abuse of power, and aping the style and title of the imaginary Gods of the earth, only laughed their pretensions the more to scorn. He did many things wrong and foolish: but they were individual acts, and recoiled upon the head of the doer. They stood upon the ground of their own merits, and could not urge in their vindication "the right divine of kings to govern wrong." They were not precedents, they were not exempt from public censure or opinion. They were not softened by prescription, nor screened by prejudice, nor sanctioned by superstition, nor rendered formidable by a principle that imposed them as obligations on all future generations: either they were State-necessities extorted by the circumstances of the time, or violent acts of the will that carried their own condemnation in their bosom. In a word, they did not proceed upon the avowed principle, that "millions were made for one," but one for millions; and as long as this distinction was kept in view, liberty was saved, and the Revolution was untouched; for it was to establish it that the Revolution was commenced, and to overturn it that the enemies of liberty waded through seas of blood, and at last succeeded. It is the practice of the partisans of the old system to cry, "*Vive le Roi, quand même!*" Why do not the people imitate the example? Till they do, they will always be sure to be foiled in the end by their adversaries, for half-measures and principles can never succeed against whole ones. Besides, Buonaparte was not strictly a free agent. He could hardly do otherwise than he did, ambition apart, and merely to preserve himself and the country he ruled. France was in a state of siege; a citadel in which Freedom had hoisted the flag of revolt against the claims of hereditary right; and that in the midst of distractions and convulsions consequent on the sentence of ban and anathema passed upon it by the rest of Europe for having engaged in this noble struggle, required a military dictator to repress internal treachery and headstrong factions, and repel external force. Who, then, shall blame Buonaparte for having taken the reins of government, and held them with a tight hand? The English, who, having set the example of liberty to the world, did all they could to stifle it? Or the Continental sovereigns, who were only acquainted with its principles by their fear and hatred of them? Or the

Emigrants, traitors to the name of men as well as Frenchmen? Or the Jacobins, who made the tree of liberty spout nothing but blood? Or its *paper* advocates, who reduce it to a theory? Or its true friends, who would sacrifice all for its sake? The last, who alone have the right to call him to a severe account, will not; for they know that, being but a handful or scattered, they had not the power to effect themselves what they might have recommended to him; and that there was but one alternative between him, and that slavery, which kills both the bodies and the souls of men!

There were two other feelings that influenced me on this subject: a love of glory, when it did not interfere with other things, and the wish to see personal merit prevail over external rank and circumstances. I felt pride (not envy) to think that one reputation in modern times was equal to the ancient, and at seeing one man greater than the throne he sat upon.

CAUSES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

THE French Revolution might be described as a remote but inevitable result of the invention of the art of printing. The gift of speech, or the communication of thought by words, is that which distinguishes man from other animals. But this faculty is limited and imperfect without the intervention of books, which render the knowledge possessed by every one in the community accessible to all. There is no doubt, then, that the press (as it has existed in modern times) is the great organ of intellectual improvement and civilisation. It was impossible, in this point of view, that those institutions, which were founded in a state of society and manners long anterior to this second breathing of understanding into the life of man, should remain on the same proud footing after it, with all their disproportions and defects. Many of these, indeed, must be softened by the lapse of time and influence of opinion, and give way of their own accord: but others are too deeply rooted in the passions and interests of men to be wrenched asunder without violence, or by the mutual consent of the parties concerned; and it is this which makes revolutions necessary, with their train of lasting good and present evil. . . .

The feudal system was in full vigour almost up to the period of the discovery of printing. Much had been done since that time: but it was the object of the French Revolution to get rid at one blow of the framework and of the last relics of that system. Before the diffusion of knowledge and inquiry, governments were for the

most part the growth of brute force or of barbarous superstition. Power was in the hands of a few, who used it only to gratify their own pride, cruelty, or avarice, and who took every means to extend and cement it by fear and favour. The lords of the earth, disdaining to rule by the choice or for the benefit of the mass of the community, whom they regarded and treated as no better than a herd of cattle, derived their title from the skies, pretending to be accountable for the exercise or abuse of their authority to God only—the throne rested on the altar, and every species of atrocity or wanton insult having power on its side received the sanction of religion, which it was thenceforth impiety and rebellion against the will of Heaven to impugn. This state of things continued and grew worse and worse, while knowledge and power were confined within mere local and personal limits. Each petty sovereign shut himself up in his castle or fortress, and scattered havoc and dismay over the unresisting country around him. In an age of ignorance and barbarism, when force and interest decided everything, and reason had no means of making itself heard, what was to prevent this or act as a check upon it? The lord himself had no other measure of right than his own will: his pride and passions would blind him to every consideration of conscience or humanity; he would regard every act of disobedience as a crime of the deepest die, and to give unbridled sway to his lawless humours would become the ruling passion and sole study of his life. How would it stand with those within the immediate circle of his influence or his vengeance? Fear would make them cringe, and lick the feet of their haughty and capricious oppressor: the hope of reward or the dread of punishment would stifle the sense of justice or pity; despair of success would make them cowards, habit would confirm them into slaves, and they would look up with bigoted devotion (the boasted *loyalty* of the good old times) to the right of the strongest as the only law. A king would only be the head of a confederation of such petty despots, and the happiness or rights of the people would be equally disregarded by them both. Religion, instead of curbing this state of rapine and licentiousness, became an accomplice and a party in the crime; gave absolution and plenary indulgence for all sorts of enormities; granting the forgiveness of Heaven in return for a rich jewel or fat abbey-lands, and setting up a regular (and what in the end proved an intolerable) traffic in violence, cruelty, and lust. As to the restraints of law, there was none but what resided in the breast of the *Grand Seigneur*, who hung up in his court-yard, without judge or jury, any one who dared to utter the slightest murmur against the most flagrant wrong. Such must be the consequence, as long as there was no common standard

or impartial judge to appeal to; and this could only be found in public opinion, the offspring of books. As long as any unjust claim or transaction was confined to the knowledge of the parties concerned, the tyrant and the slave, which is the case in all unlettered states of society, *might* must prevail over *right;* for the strongest would bully, and the weakest must submit, even in his own defence, and persuade himself that he was in the wrong, even in his own despite; but the instant the world (that dread jury) are impannelled, and called to look on and be umpires in the scene, so that nothing is done by connivance or in a corner, then reason mounts the judgment-seat in lieu of passion or interest, and opinion becomes law instead of arbitrary will; and farewell feudal lord and sovereign king!

From the moment that the press opens the eyes of the community beyond the actual sphere in which each moves, there is from that time inevitably formed the germ of a body of opinion directly at variance with the selfish and servile code that before reigned paramount, and approximating more and more to the manly and disinterested standard of truth and justice. Hitherto force, fraud, and fear decided every question of individual right or general reasoning; the possessor of rank and influence, in answer to any censure or objection to his conduct, appealed to God and to his sword:—now a new principle is brought into play which had never been so much as dreamt of, and before which he must make good his pretensions, or it will shatter his strongholds of pride and prejudice to atoms, as the pent-up air shatters whatever resists its expansive force. This power is public opinion, exercised upon men, things, and general principles, and to which mere physical power must conform, or it will crumble it to powder. Books alone teach us to judge of truth and good in the abstract: without a knowledge of things at a distance from us, we judge, like savages or animals, from our senses and appetites only; but by the aid of books and of an intercourse with the world of ideas, we are purified, raised, ennobled from savages into intellectual and rational beings. Our impressions of what is near to us are false, of what is distant feeble; but the last gaining strength from being united in public opinion, and expressed by the public voice, are like the congregated roar of many waters, and quail the hearts of princes. Who but the tyrant does not hate the tyrant? Who but the slave does not despise the slave? The first of these looks upon himself as a God, upon his vassal as a clod of the earth, and forces him to be of the same opinion: the philosopher looks upon them both as men, and instructs the world to do so. While they had to settle their pretensions by themselves, and in the night

of ignorance, it is no wonder no good was done; while pride intoxicated the one, and fear stupefied the other. But let them be brought out of that dark cave of despotism and superstition, and let a thousand other persons, who have no interest but that of truth and justice, be called on to determine between them, and the plea of the lordly oppressor to make a beast of burden of his fellow-man becomes as ridiculous as it is odious. All that the light of philosophy, the glow of patriotism, all that the brain wasted in midnight study, the blood poured out upon the scaffold or in the field of battle, can do or have done, is to take this question in all cases from before the first gross, blind, and iniquitous tribunal, where power insults over weakness, and place it before the last more just, disinterested, and in the end more formidable one, where each individual is tried by his peers, and according to rules and principles which have received the common examination and the common consent. A public sense is thus formed, free from slavish awe or the traditional assumption of insolent superiority, which the more it is exercised becomes the more enlightened and enlarged, and more and more requires equal rights and equal laws. This new sense acquired by the people, this new organ of opinion and feeling, is like bringing a battering-train to bear upon some old Gothic castle, long the den of rapine and crime, and must finally prevail against all absurd and antiquated institutions, unless it is violently suppressed, and this engine of political reform turned by bribery and terror against itself. Who in reading history, where the characters are laid open and the circumstances fairly stated, and where he himself has no false bias to mislead him, does not take part with the oppressed against the oppressor? Who is there that admires Nero at the distance of two thousand years? Did not the *Tartuffe* in a manner hoot religious hypocrisy out of France; and was it not on this account constantly denounced by the clergy? What do those who read the annals of the Inquisition think of that dread tribunal? And what has softened its horrors but those annals being read? What figure does the massacre of St. Bartholomew make in the eyes of posterity? But books anticipate and conform the decision of the public, of individuals, and even of the actors in such scenes, to that lofty and irrevocable standard, mould and fashion the heart and inmost thoughts upon it, so that something manly, liberal, and generous grows out of the fever of passion and the palsy of base fear; and this is what is meant by the progress of modern civilisation and modern philosophy. An individual in a barbarous age and country throws another who has displeased him (without other warrant than his will) into a dungeon, where he pines for years, and then

dies; and perhaps only the mouldering bones of the victim, discovered long after, disclose his fate: or if known at the time, the confessor gives absolution, and the few who are let into the secret are intimidated from giving vent to their feelings, and hardly dare disapprove in silence. Let this act of violence be repeated afterwards in story, and there is not an individual in the whole nation whose bosom does not swell with pity or whose blood does not curdle within him at the recital of so foul a wrong. Why then should there be an individual in a nation privileged to do what no other individual in the nation can be found to approve? But he has the power, and will not part with it in spite of public opinion. Then that public opinion must become active, and break the moulds of prescription in which his right derived from his ancestors is cast, and this will be a Revolution. Is that a state of things to regret or bring back, the bare mention of which makes one shudder? But the form, the shadow of it only was left: then why keep up that form, or cling to a shadow of injustice, which is no less odious than contemptible, except to make an improper use of it? Let all the wrongs, public and private, produced in France by arbitrary power and exclusive privileges for a thousand years be collected in a volume, and let this volume be read by all who have hearts to feel, or capacity to understand, and the strong, stifling sense of oppression and kindling burst of indignation that would follow, will be that impulse of public opinion that led to the French Revolution. Let all the victims that have perished under the mild, paternal sway of the ancient *régime*, in dungeons, and in agony, without a trial, without an accusation, without witnesses, be assembled together, and their chains struck off, and the shout of jubilee and exultation they would make, or that nature would make at the sight, will be the shout that was heard when the Bastille fell! The dead pause that ensued among the Gods of the earth, the rankling malice, the panic-fear, when they saw law and justice raised to an equality with their sovereign will, and mankind no longer doomed to be their sport, was that of fiends robbed of their prey: their struggles, their arts, their unyielding perseverance, and their final triumph was that of fiends when it is restored to them!

It has been sometimes pretended as if the French Revolution burst out like a vulcano, without any previous warning, only to alarm and destroy—or was one of those comet-like appearances, the approach of which no one can tell till the shock and conflagration are felt. What is the real state of the case? There was not one of those abuses and grievances which the rough grasp of the Revolution shook to air, that had not been the butt of ridicule, the theme

of indignant invective, the subject of serious reprobation for near a century. They had been held up without ceasing and without answer to the derision of the gay, the scorn of the wise, the sorrow of the good. The most witty, the most eloquent, the most profound writers were unanimous in their wish to remove or reform these abuses, and the most dispassionate and well-informed part of the community joined in the sentiment: it was only the self-interested or the grossly ignorant who obstinately clung to them. Every public and private complaint had been subjected to the touchstone of inquiry and argument; the page of history, of fiction, of the drama, of philosophy had been laid open, and their contents poured into the public ear, which turned away disgusted from the arts of sophistry or the menace of authority. It was this operation of opinion, enlarging its circle, and uniting nearly all the talents, the patriotism, and the independence of the country in its service, that brought about the events which followed. Nothing else did or could. It was not a dearth of provisions, the loss of the queen's jewels, that could overturn all the institutions and usages of a great kingdom—it was not the Revolution that produced the change in the face of society, but the change in the texture of society that produced the Revolution, and brought its outward appearance into a nearer correspondence with its inward sentiments. There is no other way of accounting for so great and sudden a transition. Power, prejudice, interest, custom, ignorance, sloth, and cowardice were against it: what then remained to counterbalance this weight, and to overturn all obstacles, but reason and conviction, which were for it? *Magna est veritas, et prævalebit.* A king was no longer thought to be an image of the Divinity; a lord to be of a different species from other men; a priest to carry an immediate passport to heaven in his pocket. On what possible plea or excuse then, when the ground of opinion on which they rested was gone, attempt to keep up the same exclusive and exorbitant pretensions, without any equivalent to the community in the awe and veneration they felt for them? Why should a nobleman be permitted to spit in your face, to rob you of an estate, or to debauch your wife or daughter with impunity, when it was no longer deemed an honour for him to do so? If manners had undergone a considerable change in this respect, so that the right was rarely exercised, why not abrogate the insult implied in the very forbearance from the injury, alike intolerable to the free-born spirit of man? Why suspend the blow over your head, if it was not meant to descend upon it? Or why hold up claims in idle mockery, which good sense and reason alike disowned, as if there were really a distinction in the two classes of society, and the one

were rightful lords over the other, instead of being by nature all equal? But the evil did not stop here; for it was never yet known that men wished to retain the semblance of a wrong, unless they aimed at profiting as far as in them lay by the practise of it. While the king wore the anointed crown that was supposed to be let down in a golden chain from heaven on his head, while the lord dyed his sword in blood, while the priest worked fancied miracles with a crucifix and beads, they did well to claim to be masters of the world, and to trample in triple phalanx on mankind: but why they should expect us to allow this claim in mere courtesy and goodwill, when it is no longer *backed* by fraud or force, is difficult to comprehend. What is a legitimate government? It is a government that professedly derives its title from the grace of God and its ancestors, that sets the choice or the good of the governed equally at defiance, and that is amenable for the use it makes of its power only to its own caprice, pride, or malice. It is an outrage and a burlesque on every principle of common sense or liberty. It puts the means for the end: mistakes a trust for a property, considers the honours and offices of the state as its natural inheritance, and the law as an unjust encroachment on its arbitrary will. What motive can there be for tolerating such a government a single instant, except from sheer necessity or blindfold ignorance? Or what chance of modifying it so as to answer any good purpose, without a total subversion of all its institutions, principles, or prejudices? The kings of France, tamed by opinion, conforming to the manners of the time, no longer stabbed a faithful counsellor in the presence-chamber, or strangled a competitor for the throne in a dungeon, or laid waste a country or fired a city for a whim: but they still made peace or war as they pleased, or hung the wealth of a province in a mistress's ear, or lost a battle by the promotion of a favourite, or ruined a treasury by the incapacity of a minister of high birth and connections. The noble no longer, as in days of yore, hung up his vassal at his door for a disrespectful word or look (which was called the *haute justice*), or issued with a numerous retinue from his lofty portcullis to carry fire and sword into the neighbouring country; but he too laboured in his vocation, and in the proud voluptuous city drained the last pittance from the toil-worn peasant by taxes, grants, and exactions, to waste it on his own vanity, luxury, and vices. If he had a quarrel with an inferior or with a rival less favoured than himself, the King would issue his *lettre-de-cachet*, and give the refractory and unsuspecting offender a lodging for life in what Mr. Burke is pleased to call the "*King's castle!*" Had opinion put a stop to this crying abuse, had it rendered this odious privilege of royalty merely nominal? "In

the mild reign of Louis XV. alone," according to Blackstone, "there were no less than fifteen thousand *lettres-de-cachet* issued." Some persons will think this fact alone sufficient to account for and to justify the overturning of the government in the reign of his successor. The priests no longer tied their victim to the stake or devoted him to the assassin's poniard as of old; they thought it enough if they could wallow in the fat of the land, pander to the vices of the rich and the abuses of power, to which they looked for the continuance of wealth and influence, and fly-blow every liberal argument, and persecute every liberal writer, from whom they dreaded their loss. From the moment that the ancient *régime* ceased to be supported by that system of faith and manners in which it had originated, the whole order of state became warped and disunited, a wretched jumble of claims that were neither enforced nor relinquished. There was ill-blood sown between the government and the people; heart-burning, jealousy, and want of confidence between the different members of the community. Every advance in civilisation was regarded by one party with dislike and distrust, while by the other every privilege held by ancient tenure was censured as the offspring of pride and prejudice. The court was like a decayed beauty, that viewed her youthful rival's charms with scorn and apprehension. The nation, in the language of the day, *had hitherto been nothing, was everything, and wanted to be something.* The great mass of society felt itself as a degraded *caste*, and was determined to wipe out the stigma with which every one of its opinions, sentiments, and pretensions was branded. This was a thing no longer to be endured, and must be got rid of at any rate. The States-General of 1789 met under different auspices from what they did in 1614, when the president of the nobles reviled the *Tiers Etat*, and was echoed by the King with greater acerbity of language, for begging to be looked upon in the light of "a younger brother of the family!" From the same want of unity and concert in the parts of the system, magnificent roads were built by the *corvées* or forced labour of the peasants, leading nowhere, and without a traveller upon them, to gratify the caprice and ostentation of the lords of the manor. Great and expensive works were undertaken by royal liberality, and laid aside by royal caprice or ministerial incapacity. The resources of the country, clogged by the remains of feudal tenures, by the ravages of the game laws, and the sloth and depression resulting from partial laws, were found inadequate to keep pace with the expenses of the court, conducted on a scale of modern dissipation and extravagance. All this was known, and had been repeated a thousand times, till it became a kind of burning shame at the door. Such a state of

things was ripe for change. After Pascal's "Provincial Letters," the treatises of the Economists, and the clouds of Memoirs of the courts of Louis XIV. and XV., after the wit of Voltaire and the eloquence of Rousseau had exhausted every topic, light or serious, connected with the prevailing order of things, the old French government became effete in all its branches, and fell to the ground as a useless incumbrance, almost without a struggle, and without one feeling of regret in one worthy and well-informed mind. . . .

ENGLAND'S HOSTILITY TO THE REVOLUTION.

The cause of American independence had succeeded; it became doubly urgent to stifle the flame of liberty which had spread from thence to France, and might consume every neighbouring government in its dazzling blaze. Great was the disappointment, and foul the stain, when England declared itself against France, thus seeking to extinguish the light it had kindled once more in the night of slavery, and heading the league of kings against the people, thenceforth never to turn back till it had finally accomplished its unrelenting purpose!

What had England to do with the quarrel? Was her religion Catholic? She had been stigmatised for above two centuries, and almost shut out of the pale of Christendom as a heretic. Was her crown despotic? Her king reigned, in contempt of an exiled Pretender and of hereditary right, as the king of a free people. Did her nobles form a privileged class, above the law? God forbid. Were her clergy armed with a power to bind and to unloose, in heaven and on earth? It was long since they had been stripped of any such power or pretension. What then was the crime which drew down on France the vengeance not only of the despots of the Continent, but the last enmity and implacable hatred of a free nation, and of a constitutional king? She had dared to aspire to the blessings of the English Constitution. Was there treason, was there danger in this? Yes; for if they made a step in advance from slavery to freedom, it was thought that we might be tempted to keep the start which we had always maintained in the race of freedom, and become *too free!* To this illiberal, mean, and envious policy we were not merely to sacrifice the peace and happiness of the world, but were to abjure and reverse and load with opprobrium every sentiment and maxim on which our own freedom and pre-eminence rested. . . .

BURKE'S WRITINGS AGAINST THE REVOLUTION.

Without the help of Burke's powerful pen, perhaps the necessary change in the tone of politics could not have been accomplished effectually or without violence. Liberty had hitherto been the watchword of Englishmen, and all their stock of enthusiasm was called forth by the mention of resistance to oppression, real or supposed. Such had been our theory; such (when occasion offered) was our practice. Mr. Burke strewed the flowers of his rhetoric over the rotten carcase of corruption; by his tropes and figures so dazzled both the ignorant and the learned, that they could not distinguish the shades between liberty and licentiousness, between anarchy and despotism; gave a romantic and novel air to the whole question; proved that slavery was a very chivalrous and liberal sentiment, that reason and prejudice were at bottom very much akin, that the Queen of France was a very beautiful vision, and that there was nothing so vile and sordid as useful knowledge and practical improvement. A crazy, obsolete government was metamorphosed into an object of fancied awe and veneration, like a mouldering Gothic ruin, which, however delightful to look at or read of, is not at all pleasant to live under. Thus the poetry and the imagination of the thing were thrown into the scale of old-fashioned barbarism and musty tradition, and turned the balance. A falser mode of judging could not be found; for things strike the imagination from privation, contrast, and suffering, which are proportionably intolerable in reality. It excites a pleasing interest to witness the representation of a tragedy; but who would, for this reason, wish to be a real actor in it? The *good old times* are good only because they are gone, or because they afford a picturesque contrast to modern ones; and to wish to bring them back, is neither to appreciate the old or the new. This served, however, to produce a diversion, and to silence the clamour, that might otherwise have arisen. . . .

THE HORRORS OF THE REVOLUTION.

The horrors then of the French Revolution did not arise out of the Revolution, but from the dread of the Coalition formed against it. To those who insist (either wilfully or from blind prejudice) that all revolutions are a scene of confusion and violence, and that this is their very end and essence, it may be proper to remark, that the American Revolution was accompanied with no such excesses;

that the English Revolution of 1688 was accomplished without a reign of terror, though it entailed a civil war and two rebellions on the kingdom; that the Low Countries revolted against, and after a long and dreadful struggle shook off the tyranny of Spain, yet no third party interfering between the people and the old government, all the cruelties and atrocities were on the side of the Duke of Alva; and that of late the Spanish Constitution was twice established without blood, though it seemed to require that cement, and fell to the ground again, being at once assailed by external and internal foes. When a house is beset by robbers, you know pretty well what course to follow, and how to calculate on your means of resistance: but if you find those within the house in league with those without, the ordinary rules of prudence and safety must be dispensed with, for there is no defence against treachery.—Another circumstance which is to be taken into the account, and which is not, of course, brought forward in a very prominent light by their own writers, is, that the French were very hardly dealt with in this case, which was an *experimentum crucis* upon the national character. They are a people extremely susceptible of provocation. Like women, forced out of their natural character, they become furies. Naturally light and quick, good sense and good temper are their undeniable and enviable characteristics: but if events occur to stagger or supersede these habitual qualities, there then seems no end of the extravagances of opinion, or cruelties in practice, of which they are capable, as it were, from the mere impression of novelty and contrast. They are the creatures of impulse, whether good or bad. Their very thoughtlessness and indifference prevent them from being shocked at the irregularities which the passion of the moment leads them to commit; and from the nicest sense of the ridiculous and the justest *tact* in common things, there is no absurdity of speculation, no disgusting rodomontade or wildness of abstraction, into which they will not run when once thrown off their guard. They excel in the trifling and familiar, and have not strength of character or solidity of judgment to cope with great questions or trying occasions. When they attempt the grand and striking, they fail from too much presumption, and from too much fickleness. In a word, from that eternal smile on the cheek to a massacre, there is but one step: for those who are delighted with everything, will be shocked at nothing. Vanity strives in general to please and make itself amiable; but if it is the fashion to do mischief, it will take the lead in mischief, and is, therefore, a dangerous principle in times of crisis and convulsion. A revolution was the Ulysses' bow of the French philosophers and politicians. They might, perhaps, have left it to

others; but having made the attempt, they demanded every kind of indulgence and encouragement in the prosecution of it, like children when they first begin to walk. Extremes in all cases meet. The abuses and corruptions of the old political system were so numerous and intricate, that they led to the most visionary and air-drawn principles of government as the only alternative; and the overgrown absurdities and mummery of the Catholic Church had risen to such a height, that they obscured religion itself, and both were overturned together. The scepticism and indifference which succeeded did not afford the best medium of resistance to power or prejudice. Perhaps a reformation in religion ought always to precede a revolution in the government. Catholics may make good subjects, but bad rebels. They are so used to the trammels of authority, that they do not immediately know how to do without them; or, like manumitted slaves, only feel assured of their liberty in committing some Saturnalian license. A revolution, to give it stability and soundness, should first be conducted down to a Protestant ground.

It has been the fashion to speak of the horrors of the French Revolution as if they were an anomaly in the history of man, and blotted out the memory of all other cruelties on record. Let us turn to another example in the annals of the same people, but at a different period, when monarchy and monkish sway were in their "high and palmy state," not shorn of their beams or curtailed of their influence by modern discoveries or degeneracy of manners. The *reign of terror*, while it lasted, cost the lives of between three and four thousand individuals in the course of less than two years in Paris alone. The massacre of St. Bartholomew cost the lives of seventy thousand Protestants in eight days throughout all France. . . .

THE TAKING OF THE BASTILLE.

The King's secret advisers were, however, by no means reconciled to this new triumph over ancient privilege and existing authority; and meditated a reprisal by removing the Assembly farther from Paris, and there dissolving, if it could not overawe them. For this purpose the troops were collected from all parts; Versailles (where the Assembly sat) was like a camp; Paris looked as if it were in a state of siege. These extensive military preparations, the trains of artillery arriving every hour from the frontier, with the presence of the foreign regiments, occasioned great suspicion and alarm; and on the motion of Mirabeau, the Assembly sent an address to the King, respectfully

urging him to remove the troops from the neighbourhood of the capital: but this he declined doing, hinting at the same time that they might retire, if they chose, to Noyon or Soissons, thus placing themselves at the disposal of the Crown, and depriving themselves of the aid of the people.

Paris was in a state of extreme agitation. This immense city was unanimous in its devotedness to the Assembly. A capital is at all times, and Paris was then more particularly, the natural *focus* of a revolution. To this many causes contribute. The actual presence of the monarch dissipates the illusions of loyalty; and he is no longer (as in the distant province or petty village) an abstraction of power and majesty, another name for all that is great and exalted, but a common mortal, one man among a million of men, perhaps one of the meanest of his race. Pageants and spectacles may impose on the crowd; but a weak or haughty look undoes the effect, and leads to disadvantageous reflections on the title to, or the good resulting from, all this display of pomp and magnificence. From being the seat of the Court, its vices are better known, its meannesses are more talked of. In the number and distraction of passing objects and interests, the present occupies the mind alone—the chain of antiquity is broken, and custom loses its force. Men become "flies of a summer." Opinion has here many ears, many tongues, and many hands to work with. The slightest whisper is rumoured abroad, and the roar of the multitude breaks down the prison or the palace gates. They are seldom brought to act together but in extreme cases; nor is it extraordinary that, in such cases, the conduct of the people is violent, from the consciousness of transient power, its impatience of opposition, its unwieldy bulk and loose texture, which cannot be kept within nice bounds or stop at half-measures. —Nothing could be more critical or striking than the situation of Paris at this moment. Everything betokened some great and decisive change. Foreign bayonets threatened the inhabitants from without, famine within. The capitalists dreaded a bankruptcy; the enlightened and patriotic the return of absolute power; the common people threw all the blame on the privileged classes. The press inflamed the public mind with innumerable pamphlets and invectives against the Government, and the journals regularly reported the proceedings and debates of the Assembly. Everywhere in the open air, particularly in the Palais-Royal, groups were formed, where they read and harangued by turns. It was in consequence of a proposal made by one of the speakers in the Palais-Royal, that the prison of the Abbaye was forced open, and some grenadiers of the French Guards, who had been confined for re-

fusing to fire upon the people, were set at liberty and led out in triumph.

Paris was in this state of excitement and apprehension when the Court, having first stationed a number of troops at Versailles, at Sèvres, at the Champ-de-Mars, and at St. Denis, commenced offensive measures by the complete change of all the Ministers and by the banishment of Necker. The latter, on Saturday the 11th of July, while he was at dinner, received a note from the King, enjoining him to quit the kingdom without a moment's delay. He calmly finished his dinner, without saying a word of the order he had received, and immediately after got into his carriage with his wife and took the road to Brussels. The next morning the news of his disgrace reached Paris. The whole city was in a tumult: above ten thousand persons were, in a short time, collected in the garden of the Palais-Royal. A young man of the name of Camille Desmoulins, one of the habitual and most enthusiastic haranguers of the crowd, mounted on a table, and cried out, that "there was not a moment to lose; that the dismission of Necker was the signal for the St. Bartholomew of liberty; that the Swiss and German regiments would presently issue from the Champ-de-Mars to massacre the citizens; and that they had but one resource left, which was to resort to arms." And the crowd, tearing each a green leaf, the colour of hope, from the chestnut-trees in the garden, which were nearly laid bare, and wearing it as a badge, traversed the streets of Paris, with the busts of Necker and of the Duke of Orleans (who was also said to be arrested) covered with crape and borne in solemn pomp. They had proceeded in this manner as far as the Place Vendôme, when they were met by a party of the Royal Allemand, whom they put to flight by pelting them with stones; but at the Place Louis XV. they were assailed by the dragoons of the Prince of Lambese; the bearer of one of the busts and a private of the French Guards were killed; the mob fled into the Garden of the Thuilleries, whither the Prince followed them at the head of his dragoons, and attacked a number of persons who knew nothing of what was passing, and were walking quietly in the Gardens. In the scuffle an old man was wounded; the confusion as well as the resentment of the people became general; and there was but one cry, "*To arms!*" to be heard throughout the Thuilleries, the Palais-Royal, in the city, and in the suburbs.

The French Guards had been ordered to their quarters in the Chaussée-d'Antin, where sixty of Lambese's dragoons were posted opposite to watch them. A dispute arose, and it was with much difficulty they were prevented from coming to blows. But when the former learned that one of their comrades had been slain, their

indignation could no longer be restrained; they rushed out, killed two of the foreign soldiers, wounded three others, and the rest were forced to fly. They then proceeded to the Place Louis XV., where they stationed themselves between the people and the troops, and guarded this position the whole of the night. The soldiers in the Champ-de-Mars were then ordered to attack them, but refused to fire, and were remanded back to their quarters. The defection of the French Guards, with the repugnance of the other troops to march against the capital, put a stop for the present to the projects of the Court. In the meantime, the populace had assembled at the Hôtel-de-Ville, and loudly demanded the sounding of the tocsin and the arming of the citizens. Several highly respectable individuals also met here, and did much good in repressing a spirit of violence and mischief. They could not, however, effect everything. A number of disorderly people and of workmen out of employ, without food or place of abode, set fire to the barriers, infested the streets, and pillaged several houses in the night between the 12th and 13th.

The departure of Necker, which had excited such a sensation in the capital, produced as deep an impression at Versailles and on the Assembly, who manifested surprise and indignation, but not dejection. Lally-Tollendal pronounced a formal eulogium on the exiled Minister. After one or two displays of theatrical vehemence, which is inseparable from French enthusiasm and eloquence (would that the whole were not so soon forgotten like a play!) they dispatched a deputation to the King, informing him of the situation and troubles of Paris, and praying him to dismiss the troops and entrust the defence of the capital to the city militia. The deputation received an answer which amounted to a repulse. The Assembly now perceived that the designs of the Court-party were irrevocably fixed, and that it had only itself to rely upon. It instantly voted the responsibility of the Ministers and of all the advisers of the Crown, *of whatsoever rank or degree.* This last clause was pointed at the Queen, whose influence was greatly dreaded. They then, from an apprehension that the doors might be closed during the night in order to dissolve the Assembly, declared their sittings permanent. A vice-president was chosen, to lessen the fatigue of the Archbishop of Vienne. The choice fell upon La Fayette. In this manner a part of the Assembly sat up all night. It passed without deliberation, the deputies remaining on their seats, silent, but calm and serene. What thoughts must have revolved through the minds of those present on this occasion! Patriotism and philosophy had here taken up their sanctuary. If we consider their situation; the

hopes that filled their breasts; the trials they had to encounter; the future destiny of their country, of the world, which hung on their decision as in a balance; the bitter wrongs they were about to sweep away; the good they had it in their power to accomplish—the countenances of the Assembly must have been majestic, and radiant with the light that through them was about to dawn on ages yet unborn. They might foresee a struggle, the last convulsive efforts of pride and power to keep the world in its wonted subjection—but that was nothing—their final triumph over all opposition was assured in the eternal principles of justice and in their own unshaken devotedness to the great cause of mankind! If the result did not altogether correspond to the intentions of those firm and enlightened patriots who so nobly planned it, the fault was not in them, but in others.

At Paris the insurrection had taken a more decided turn. Early in the morning, the people assembled in large bodies at the Hôtel-de-Ville; the tocsin sounded from all the churches; the drums beat to summon the citizens together, who formed themselves into different bands of volunteers. All that they wanted was arms. These, except a few at the gunsmiths' shops, were not to be had. They then applied to M. de Flesselles, a provost of the city, who amused them with fair words. "My children," he said, "I am your father!" This paternal style seems to have been the order of the day. A committee sat at the Hôtel-de-Ville to take measures for the public safety. Meanwhile a granary had been broken open; the *Garde-Meuble* had been ransacked for old arms; the armourers' shops were plundered; all was a scene of confusion, and the utmost dismay everywhere prevailed. But no private mischief was done. It was a moment of popular frenzy, but one in which the public danger and the public good overruled every other consideration. The grain which had been seized, the carts loaded with provisions, with plate or furniture, and stopped at the barriers, were all taken to the Grêve as a public depôt. The crowd incessantly repeated the cry for arms, and were pacified by an assurance that thirty thousand muskets would speedily arrive from Charleville. The Duke d'Aumont was invited to take the command of the popular troops; and on his hesitating, the Marquis of Salle was nominated in his stead. The green cockade was exchanged for one of red and blue, the colours of the city. A quantity of powder was discovered, as it was about to be conveyed beyond the barriers; and the cases of firearms promised from Charleville turned out, on inspection, to be filled with old rags and logs of wood. The rage and impatience of the multitude now became extreme. Such perverse trifling and barefaced duplicity

would be unaccountable anywhere else; but in France they pay with promises; and the provost, availing himself of the credulity of his audience, promised them still more arms at the Chartreux. To prevent a repetition of the excesses of the mob, Paris was illuminated at night, and a patrole paraded the streets.

The following day, the people, being deceived as to the convoy of arms that was to arrive from Charleville, and having been equally disappointed in those at the Chartreux, broke into the Hospital of Invalids, in spite of the troops stationed in the neighbourhood, and carried off a prodigious number of stands of arms concealed in the cellars. An alarm had been spread in the night that the regiment quartered at St. Denis was on its way to Paris, and that the cannon of the Bastille had been pointed in the direction of the street of St. Antoine. This information, the dread which this fortress inspired, the recollection of the horrors which had been perpetrated there, its very name, which appalled all hearts and made the blood run cold, the necessity of wresting it from the hands of its old and feeble possessors, drew the attention of the multitude to this hated spot. From nine in the morning of the memorable 14th of July till two, Paris from one end to the other rang with the same watchword: *"To the Bastille! To the Bastille!"* The inhabitants poured there in throngs from all quarters, armed with different weapons; the crowd that already surrounded it was considerable; the sentinels were at their posts, and the drawbridges raised as in war-time.

A deputy from the district of St. Louis de la Culture, Thuriot de la Rosiere, then asked to speak with the Governor, M. Delaunay. Being admitted into his presence, he required that the direction of the cannon should be changed. Three guns were pointed against the entrance, though the Governor pretended that everything remained in the state in which it had always been. About forty Swiss and eighty Invalids garrisoned the place, from whom he obtained a promise not to fire on the people, unless they were themselves attacked. His companions began to be uneasy, and called loudly for him. To satisfy them, he showed himself on the ramparts, from whence he could see an immense multitude flocking from all parts, and the Fauxbourg St. Antoine advancing as it were in a mass. He then returned to his friends, and gave them what tidings he had collected.

But the crowd, not satisfied, demanded the surrender of the fortress. From time to time the angry cry was repeated: *"Down with the Bastille!"* Two men, more determined than the rest, pressed forward, attacked a guard-house, and attempted to break down the chains of the bridge with the blows of an axe. The

soldiers called out to them to fall back, threatening to fire if they did not. But they repeated their blows, shattered the chains, and lowered the drawbridge, over which they rushed with the crowd. They threw themselves upon the second bridge, in the hopes of making themselves masters of it in the same manner, when the garrison fired and dispersed them for a few minutes. They soon, however, returned to the charge; and for several hours during a murderous discharge of musketry, and amidst heaps of the wounded and dying, renewed the attack with unabated courage and obstinacy, led on by two brave men, Elie and Hulin, their rage and desperation being inflamed to a pitch of madness by the scene of havoc around them. Several deputations arrived from the Hôtel-de-Ville to offer terms of accommodation: but in the noise and fury of the moment they could not make themselves heard, and the storming continued as before.

The assault had been carried on in this manner with inextinguishable rage and great loss of blood to the besiegers, though with little progress made for above four hours, when the arrival of the French Guards with cannon altered the face of things. The garrison urged the Governor to surrender. The wretched Delaunay, dreading the fate which awaited him, wanted to blow up the place and bury himself under the ruins, and was advancing for this purpose with a lighted match in his hand towards the powder magazine, but was prevented by the soldiers, who planted the white flag on the platform, and reversed their arms in token of submission. This was not enough for those without. They demanded with loud and reiterated cries to have the drawbridges let down; and on an assurance being given that no harm was intended, the bridges were lowered, and the assailants tumultuously rushed in. The endeavours of their leaders could not save the Governor or a number of the soldiers, who were seized on by the infuriated multitude, and put to death for having fired on their fellow-citizens. Thus fell the Bastille; and the shout that accompanied its downfall was echoed through Europe, and men rejoiced that "the grass grew where the Bastille stood!" Earth was lightened of a load that oppressed it, nor did this ghastly object any longer startle the sight, like an ugly spider lying in wait for its accustomed prey, and brooding in sullen silence over the wrongs which it had the will, though not the power, to inflict.

The stormers of the Bastille arrived at the Place de Grève, rending the air with shouts of victory. They marched on to the great hall of the Hôtel-de-Ville, in all the terrific and unusual pomp of a popular triumph. Such of them as had displayed most courage and ardour were borne on the shoulders of the rest, crowned with

laurel. They were escorted up the hall by near two thousand of the populace, their eyes flaming, their hair in wild disorder, variously accoutred, pressing tumultuously on each other, and making the heavy floors almost crack beneath their footsteps. One bore the keys and flag of the Bastille, another the regulations of the prison brandished on the point of a bayonet; a third (a thing horrible to relate!) held in his bloody fingers the buckle of the Governor's stock. In this order it was that they entered the Hôtel-de-Ville to announce their victory to the Committee, and to decide on the fate of their remaining prisoners, who, in spite of the impatient cries to give no quarter, were rescued by the exertions of the commandant La Salle, Moreau de St. Mery, and the intrepid Elie. Then came the turn of the despicable Flesselles, that caricature of vapid, frothy impertinence, who thought he could baffle the roaring tiger with grimace and shallow excuses. "To the Palais-Royal with him!" was the word; and he answered with callous indifference, "Well, to the Palais-Royal if you will." He was hemmed in by the crowd, and borne along without any violence being offered him to the place of destination; but at the corner of the Quai Le Pelletier, an unknown hand approached him, and stretched him lifeless on the spot with a pistol-shot. During the night succeeding this eventful day Paris was in the greatest agitation, hourly expecting (in consequence of the statements of intercepted letters) an attack from the troops. Every preparation was made to defend the city. Barricadoes were formed, the streets unpaved, pikes forged, the women piled stones on the tops of houses to hurl them down on the heads of the soldiers, and the National Guard occupied the outposts.

THE BURNING OF MOSCOW.

On the 14th of September, Napoleon rejoined his advanced guard. He mounted his horse a few leagues from Moscow, and marched slowly and circumspectly, expecting the enemy and a battle. The ground was favourable, and works had been marked out; but everything had been abandoned, and not an individual was to be met with. At length, the last height had been gained that is contiguous to Moscow, and commands it: it is called the "Mount of Salvation," because, from the top of it, at the sight of their holy city, the inhabitants make the sign of the cross, and prostrate themselves on the ground. The light troops soon reached the summit. It was two o'clock, and the great city was glittering with a thousand colours in the sun. Struck with astonishment at the spectacle,

they halted, and exclaimed in admiration, "Moscow! Moscow!" All then quickened their pace, and at length ran forward in disorder, till at last the whole army, clapping their hands, repeated the exclamation in a transport of joy; as mariners cry "Land! Land!" at the end of a long and dangerous voyage. At the sight of this golden city, this brilliant clasp of Europe and Asia; this superb emporium, where the luxury, the customs, and the arts of the two finest divisions of the globe meet: a city admirable in itself, but more so in the wide waste that surrounds it (that, like an isthmus, unites the extremes of barbarism and wealth, the north and the south, the east and the west, antiquity and new-born empire, the crescent with the cross, the palaces of the Cæsars with the halls of Runic superstition), the French army halted (as well they might) with feelings of proud and conscious exultation. What a day of glory was that—to be succeeded by what a fall—which was not unnatural neither, for the height of glory is only built on the extreme verge of danger and difficulty! Over this vast and novel scene, which rose at once to the pomp of history, they fancied themselves moving in splendid procession, amidst the acclamations of surrounding nations: here was the termination which had been promised to all their labours; here they ought to stop, as they could no longer surpass themselves or be surpassed by others. At this moment of enthusiasm, all losses and sufferings were forgotten. It seemed impossible to purchase at too dear a rate the proud satisfaction of being able to say for the remainder of their lives, "I belonged to the army of Moscow."

Napoleon himself hastened forward to the view. He stopped in evident transport: an exclamation of self-congratulation fell from his lips. The marshals, too, gathered round him with delight, eager to pay homage to his success. But in the mind of Napoleon the first burst of feeling was never of long duration, as he had too many important concerns to attend to give himself up entirely to his sensations. His first exclamation was, "There, at last, then, is that famous city!" And his second, "It was high time!" His eye was now intently fixed on that capital, where he imagined that he saw the whole Russian Empire. Those walls enclosed the whole of his hopes, peace, the expenses of the war, and immortal glory When, then, would its gates open, and a deputation issue from it, to lay its wealth, its population, its senate, and its chief nobility at his feet? Already, both on his left and on his right, he saw the hostile city attacked by Prince Eugene and Poniatowski, and in front Murat had reached the suburbs; yet there was not the slightest appearance of anything like a pacific overture. No one had approached

but an officer from Miloradowich, to say that he would set fire to the city, if he were not allowed time to evacuate it. The foremost troops of the two armies were for a short time intermingled. Murat was recognised by the Cossacks, who crowded around him to extol his bravery and admire his finery. He gave them his watch and those of his officers. One of them called him his *Hetman*.

In the meantime the day was passing away, and the Emperor's anxiety increased. The army became impatient. A few officers penetrated within the walls. "Moscow was deserted." At this intelligence, which he repelled with considerable vehemence, but which was confirmed by various reports, Napoleon descended the *Mount of Salvation*, and advanced towards the Dorogomilow gate. He called aloud to Daru, and said, "Moscow deserted! A most unlikely event! We must enter it, and ascertain the fact. Go, and bring the *boyars* before me." He would not believe that these men had all fled. How, indeed, was it possible to conceive, that so many sumptuous palaces and splendid temples and wealthy factories should be abandoned by the owners, like the miserable huts which the army had passed on their march? Daru had now returned, having failed in his mission. Not a single Muscovite was to be found: no smoke was seen ascending from the meanest hearth; nor was the slightest noise to be heard throughout that populous and extensive city; its three hundred thousand inhabitants seemed all dumb and motionless, as by enchantment. It was the silence of the desert. Napoleon still persisted, till an officer went and brought before him half a dozen miserable objects, who were the only inhabitants he could find. He then no longer doubted the fact, shrugged his shoulders, and contented himself with saying, "The Russians are as yet little aware what effect the taking of their capital will have upon them."

Murat, with his long and heavy column of cavalry, had entered Moscow for more than an hour. They made their way into that gigantic body, and found it as yet uninjured, but inanimate. Struck with surprise at the mighty solitude, they marched on in silence and listened to the sound of their horses' feet re-echoed from tenantless palaces. On a sudden, the fire of small-arms attracted their attention. The column halted. Its hindmost horses still covered the plain. Its centre was passing through one of the longest streets of the city: its head was near the Kremlin. The gates of that citadel appeared to be shut: but from within the enclosure proceeded the most savage yells, and a few men and women of the most disgusting aspect, drunk, and uttering frightful imprecations, were observed, fully armed, upon the walls. Murat sent them offers of peace, but in vain; and it became necessary to force the gates with

cannon. One of these squalid-looking wretches rushed upon the King of Naples, and attempted twice to kill one of his officers, flying at him like a wild beast, and endeavouring to tear him with his teeth, after his arms were pinioned. Here also were found five hundred recruits, whom the Russians had left behind; and several thousand stragglers and deserters were taken and set at liberty by the advanced guard, who afterwards rejoined their countrymen. Murat, detained only a short time by the capture of the Kremlin, passed hastily on by the road to Voladimir and Asia, in pursuit of the enemy.

Napoleon did not enter Moscow before night. He stopped at one of the first houses in the Dorogomilow suburb. He there appointed Marshal Mortier governor of that capital. "Above all," said he, "no pillage. Your head shall answer for it. Defend Moscow both against friends and foes." During the night, unfavourable reports came in in rapid succession. Some Frenchmen, who had been residents in the country, and even an officer of the police, announced the intended burning. The Emperor slept little, called for his attendants every half-hour, to make them repeat the ominous intelligence they had heard, but at last wrapped himself up in incredulity; when, about two o'clock, he was apprised that the flames had broken out. It was at the merchants' palace or Exchange, in the centre of the city, and most opulent quarter of it. He immediately gave orders, and dispatched messages with great promptitude. As soon as daylight appeared, he hastened to the city himself, and severely menaced the Young Guard and Mortier. The Marshal showed him houses covered with iron roofs; closely shut up, and without any marks of violence, or an attempt to break into them: yet a black smoke was already issuing from them. Napoleon entered the Kremlin, thoughtful and uneasy. At the sight of this palace, at once of Gothic and modern architecture, founded by the Romanofs and Rurics, of their still extant throne, of the Cross of the great Ivan, and of the most beautiful part of the city, of which the Kremlin commands a view, his hopes revived. He was heard to say, "I am at length, then, in Moscow; in the ancient city of the Czars; in the Kremlin." He examined every part with an eager curiosity and a lofty feeling of complacency. In a moment of satisfaction and triumph, he addressed a pacific overture to the Emperor Alexander. A Russian officer of rank, who had just been discovered in the great hospital, was made the bearer of it.

Daylight favoured the exertions of the Duke of Treviso, who succeeded in checking the flames. The incendiaries kept themselves so well concealed, that their existence was much doubted. At length

order was re-established, apprehensions dispelled, and every one betook himself to rest in the best quarters he could find, and determined to make the most of his present situation. Two officers, who had taken up their quarters in one of the buildings of the Kremlin, overlooking the north and west, were awakened about midnight by an overpowering light. They instantly looked out, and saw palaces enveloped in flames, which, after exhibiting all their striking and grotesque architecture in a glare of light, speedily converted them into ashes. The wind, being in the north, drove the flames directly upon the Kremlin; so that the two Frenchmen felt considerable alarm for that vast enclosure of buildings, where the choicest troops of the army and their renowned commander were reposing. Already the burning flakes and brands began to be carried towards the roofs of the Kremlin, when the wind suddenly shifting, impelled the mischief in a different direction. The officers, satisfied of their own security, said, "Let others look to it now," and again fell asleep. But they were soon after roused by a new and more vivid burst of light, and saw flames rising in the opposite quarter, which still menaced the Kremlin. Three times the wind shifted; and each time these stubborn and avenging fires, as if attracted by the size of the building or by what it contained, pointed to the Kremlin. An alarming and awful suspicion now darted on their minds. The Muscovites, informed of the rash and dangerous negligence of their enemies, had possibly conceived the idea of destroying the soldiery together with the city, as they lay overpowered by wine, fatigue, and sleep; or rather, perhaps, they had expected to involve Napoleon himself in the catastrophe. Moscow seemed no inadequate funeral pile for so mighty a foe. Such a sacrifice might indeed have been made at a cheaper rate than that which was actually paid for it. Not only did the Kremlin enclose a magazine of powder, unknown to the French; but, through inattention, that very same night a whole park of artillery had been stationed under Napoleon's windows. If a single spark out of the myriads that were flying over their heads had dropped upon one of the *caissons*, the flower of the army, with the Emperor, must have been destroyed.

At length, day appeared. It came to add to the horrors of the scene, while it dimmed its splendour. Many of the officers took shelter in the halls of the palace. The chiefs, including Mortier, overcome with the exertions which they had made for six-and-thirty hours, returned to the Kremlin in a state of exhaustion and despair. All were silent; but they inwardly blamed themselves as authors of the disaster. It was supposed that the neglect and intoxication of the soldiers must have commenced what the tempest had aggravated;

and they began to regard themselves, and to imagine that they would be regarded by all Europe, with a sort of horror. But from these painful reflections they were relieved by the accounts which came in fast, and were more and more confirmed, that the Russians were alone chargeable with the calamity. On the first night, between the 14th and 15th, a globe of fire had been let down on the palace of Prince Trubetskoi, and had consumed it. This was the signal for setting fire to the Exchange. Russian police-officers had been seen stirring up the flames with lances dipped in pitch. When the French soldiers tried to get into a house seemingly uninhabited, they were frequently driven back, either by the smoke issuing from it, or by shells bursting within it. A number of frantic men and women were seen roaming amid the flames, with flambeaux in their hands, spreading the work of destruction, and thus completing an image of the infernal world. It appeared that these banditti had been let loose from prison to execute a design which it exhausted all the fortitude of patriotism or virtue barely to conceive. Orders were given to try and shoot every incendiary on the spot. The army was drawn out; the Old Guard had taken arms; alarm, astonishment, mortification, filled every breast. Napoleon, whose sleep no one had ventured to disturb during the night, was awoke by the double light of day and of the conflagration. Vexed and irritated at first, he was bent on mastering the flames; but he soon yielded to what was absolutely inevitable. Having conquered his enemies by inflicting on them all the terrors of regular warfare, he saw that they were determined to defeat him by inflicting still greater evils on themselves. For once he found himself surpassed by barbarous daring and resolution.

The mighty conquest, for which he had sacrificed so much, and which he had at last achieved, was now vanishing from him in a whirlwind of smoke and flame. He was in a state of excessive agitation, and seemed in a manner parched up by the flames with which he was surrounded. He paced the apartments with hurried steps, quitted and resumed his seat, and left business of the most pressing urgency, to run to the windows and observe the progress of the fire; his abrupt and eager movements indicated the trouble of his mind, while he gave vent to his oppressed and labouring feelings in short and broken exclamations:—"What a frightful spectacle! To have done it themselves! Such a number of palaces! They are genuine Scythians!". Between him and the fire there was a large and open piece of ground, close to which was the Mosqua, with its two quays; yet the glasses of the windows against which he leaned were so violently heated that he could not touch them with his hand. A report was now spread that the Kremlin was undermined;

some of the attendants nearly lost their senses through terror; the military waited with firmness whatever doom Fate and the Emperor should assign them: Buonaparte only noticed the alarm with a distrustful smile. He seemed determined to keep possession of his conquest, though the fire gained ground every moment; seizing the bridges, all the accesses to the fortress, the neighbouring houses, and holding him almost a prisoner in the walls of the Kremlin. Night was advancing, and the equinoctial wind blew with redoubled violence. The King of Naples and Prince Eugene arrived at this crisis; and, in conjunction with Berthier, in vain urged him to depart. On a sudden a cry was heard that "the Kremlin was on fire." Napoleon went out to see the source of the danger, which had been put a stop to in two places; but the tower was still burning, and a police-soldier had been detected there who had set it on fire. The exasperated grenadiers dragged him into the adjoining court-yard, where they dispatched him with their bayonets.

This incident determined Napoleon. All, it was evident, was devoted to destruction: even the ancient and sacred pile of the Kremlin. He descended the northern staircase, celebrated for the murder of the Strelitzes, and gave orders for procuring a guide to conduct him out of the city a league on the Petersburg road, to the castle of Petrowski. The flames, however, blocked up the gates of the citadel, and baffled the first attempts made to leave it. After repeated search, a postern-gate was discovered leading across the rocks, which opened towards the Mosqua. Through this narrow pass Napoleon, with his officers and guard, effected his escape from the Kremlin. But being nearer to the flames than before, they could neither go back nor stay where they were: how was it possible to cross the waves of that sea of fire? Even those who had passed through and examined the city, now bewildered by the wind and blinded by the dust, were totally unable distinctly to recognise the several parts, as the streets had disappeared amidst the smoke and ruins. There was, however, no time to be lost: the roaring of the flames grew louder every moment. A single narrow street, crooked and in every part on fire, caught their attention, but looked more like an avenue to the hell before them than a way to avoid it. The Emperor darted forward on foot, without a moment's hesitation, into this formidable pass. He advanced over the scorching cinders, which grated under his feet, amidst the perils of dividing roofs and falling beams, and domes covered with melting iron, all scattering tremendous ruins around him. These ruins often impeded his progress. The flames, which were consuming the houses between which the group proceeded, after mounting to

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the greatest height, were turned back by the force of the wind in arches of fire over their heads. They were walking on a soil of fire, under a sky of fire, and between walls of fire. The heat was tormenting and almost putting out their eyes, which yet it was necessary to keep open and intently fixed on the occurring circumstances. A stifling air, hot ashes, innumerable flakes of fire, made their respiration short, dry, and gasping, and they were half-suffocated with the smoke. In this state of inexpressible distress, their guide stopped suddenly, quite at a loss and confounded. And if some pillaging stragglers, belonging to the first corps, had not recognised the Emperor through the hurricane of flames, the event must have been fatal. They instantly ran to his aid, and led the way to the still smoking ruins of a quarter of the city which had been laid in ashes in the morning. Just at this time they fell in with the Prince of Eckmuhl. This marshal, who had been wounded at the Mosqua, had actually ordered his men to carry him through the flames in order to extricate Napoleon or to perish with him. He threw himself into his arms in a transport of joy. The Emperor received him well, but with a composure which in the midst of danger never deserted him. In order to effect his escape, it was yet necessary to pass by a long convoy of gunpowder, which was defiling amidst the fire. This was not the least of his risks, but it was the last; and at night they reached Petrowski. . . .

THE END.

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